

PHILMAY'S ILLUSTRATED WINTER ANNUAL.



Season 1903-1904.

EDITED BY HARRY THOMPSON.

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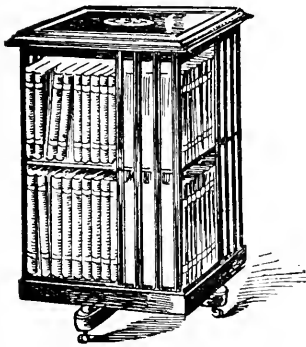
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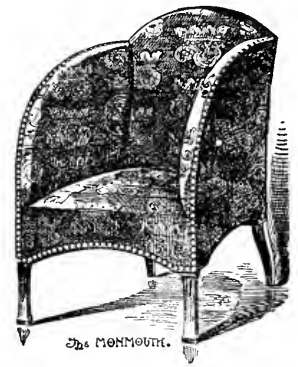
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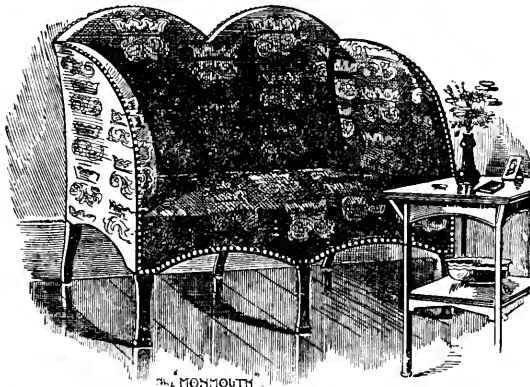


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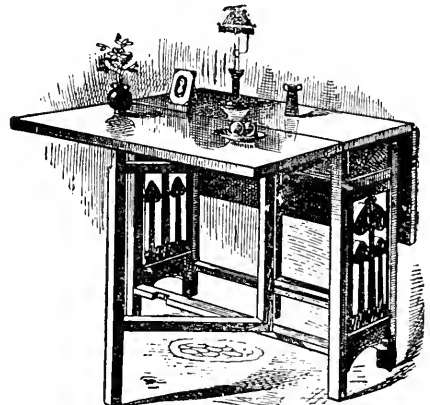
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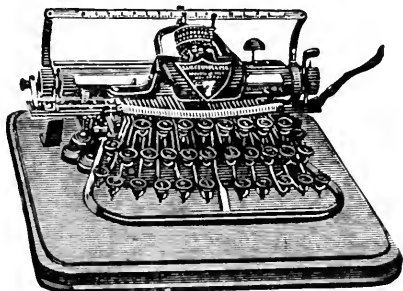
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Phil May's Illustrated Annual.

Season]

WINTER NUMBER.

[1903-1904.

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All MSS. (which should be typewritten) submitted must bear the names and addresses of the senders, and be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

The Editor will be glad to consider *suitable* contributions, but cannot hold himself responsible for the safety of MSS. Communications should be addressed "The Editor, PHIL MAY'S ANNUAL, 2 Creed Lane, E.C.

PLAYER'S. NAVY CUT



JILTED

Phil MA-
/30

Arriet

"If I'd only thought to
buy 'em some Players!"

Obit. PHIL MAY.

Born April 22, 1864. Died August 5, 1903.

IT is with the deepest regret on the part of all connected with PHIL MAY'S ANNUAL that this issue of the Winter Number of 1903 appears when the brilliant and kindly-hearted jester of the pen and pencil has been laid to rest.

Of the masterly genius so abruptly cut off in the "fatal thirties" it is not our purpose here to attempt a commendation. Already the laurels of fame Phil May had so bravely and worthily won lie thick upon his grave; and it can be boldly prophesied that Time, that test of temporary triumph, will need the aid of many years to even dim their lustre.

Of the man, Phil May, himself, "to know him was to love him,"—for even that un-English use of the word, when applied between men, is excusable in this case. The tragedy of toil marked his earliest years, but left no trace of embitterment on his latter days. His generous heart was opened only the more readily to any tale of sorrow and failure by the memories of his own struggling youth; and who can say it was not that "struggling youth" which enacted the toll that finally closed the merry magician's life?

THE EDITOR.

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FIFTEENTH ISSUE.

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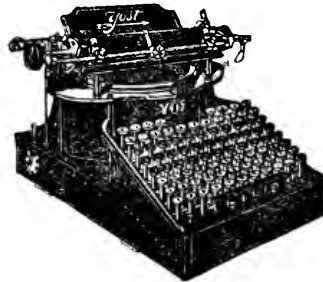
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"HULLO, OLD CHAP, YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'D HAD SPORT! IN AT THE KILL?"
"WELL, NO. I WAS IN AT THE DITCH AND IN AT THE RIVER. WE CAN'T EXPECT TO BE IN EVERYWHERE."

THE MAN WHO RISKED IT

BY

A. G. HALES

IN a small town in Upper Burmah a number of men celebrated in many walks of life had met to investigate certain phenomena presented to the scientific world by one Jarl Ossgood.

They represented much that was good and great in the world, those men who constituted this group of investigators.

One man was an American railroad king, a person of profound thought, who might have been almost anything in this world, if his boyhood had not been tainted by the crude bitter knowledge that direct personal poverty brings with it.

He had turned his hand and heart to the making of money from infancy, and he had succeeded, but to such a man mere money was not satisfying.

When he became vastly rich he knew that he had not won life's battle—knew that *he* never would win it; all that he had won was a golden sword with which to fight, but the best of his life lay behind him—the energy, the power, the splendid courage and resource of his youth was gone for ever, buried in the cinders where his golden sword was forged.

Yet the thirst for knowledge—not the mere knowledge of the schools, which any dolt who possesses a rich father may obtain, but the knowledge of things outside the beaten track

—remained with him in the prime of his life.

There was another man there who had given all his earlier years to a toil that had returned him only fruit which did not satisfy. He was a soldier, a man whom Europe knew as an iron-willed ruthless man on the field of war; his name made the enemies of his country tremble, for when he struck, he struck with a giant's force and spared not; he too was unsatisfied with the knowledge he possessed, and longed to know what might lie beyond the veil.

One other sitting there was nearly great, he had written three things that stretched above the heads of men and turned their faces to the skies.

A poem that had wings, and when words are winged they fly along the ages.

A book that laid its fingers on the harp-strings of the masses, not boldly, forcefully, nobly, but with uncertain strength; it was not great, but it was nearly great; the writer's inborn commonness of soul had marred his masterpiece, yet here and there a touch of splendour killed the greyness, and held a world enthralled.

Also, he had written a story, a short story that carried with it the throb of drums, the scent of blood spilt in battle, the moans of the wounded, the deep-drawn breaths of the dying, the laughter of the victors, the anguish of the

vanquished, and through it all, like a thread of scarlet through a woof of white, ran the triumph of empire ; but the body of the story was thin, a poor, cold, clayey thing magnetised at times to glorious life, but only one limb at a time.

His book, his poem, his short story all told the one tale.

He had flashes of genius, that illuminated all he touched, but the body of his work belonged to the earth-earthly.

As for the rest of the investigators, they were men who had all made a mark upon the time in which they lived.

One was a great railway engineer, a man who laughed at rivers and mountains that had defied the march of progress for ages.

Another was the hero of *this* story, "the man who risked it."

He was famous, but he was poor ; and now his powers were failing him just when he needed them most, for the wife he loved, the brave, patient little woman who had helped him fight life's battle step by step, was sinking under the unending strain, his boys were growing to that age when their education drained his scanty purse almost dry, and—his hand was losing its cunning.

In a few short years the world—the fickle fleeting world—would forget that he had ever existed, and the last chapters of his life would be spent in misery and want.

He did not mind the outlook so much upon his own account, as for the sake of the woman who had trodden the thorny path with him so uncomplainingly. When he thought of her, his soul writhed in torment ; he wanted to make the end of her life a dream of happiness, to compensate her for all that she had done for him.

She had given up home and friends to marry him, when he was a poor unknown youth with

nothing to recommend him but his faith in himself, and a capacity for work which few men in his time could surpass.

When the children came, she had sacrificed a greater part of her maternal joys so that she might help the man she had married, though she knew that all his soul was wrapped up in his fame.

But a time had come when he saw that the plaudits of mobs, the praise of learned men, the glow and the gush of critics was not worth one hour of a good wife's love, or one day of the happiness that his beautiful children grouped around a mother's knee could give.

Then he looked at his past. Turning his chin upon his shoulder, he gazed steadily, unflinchingly, along the highways of his life, and saw the milestones standing one by one, and at every milestone he saw a woman standing meekly, patiently, bravely, ready to dress his wounded feet, and he knew that in his search for fame he had been unconsciously brutal, unknowingly selfish, unceasingly cruel—and the knowledge brought remorse.

He became feverishly anxious to make money, to store up wealth, that joy might come to his wife before it was too late. She was not an old woman, not more than six and thirty, tall and slender, and almost girlish in her fragility.

He would throw fame to the dogs and toil for money, he fell at the feet of the golden calf and worshipped, but the cult of the calf was not for him—money did not, would not come.

Men called him great and fed him upon platitudes, but they kept their purse-strings closed, and he had come to Burmah for one of the great journals in order to earn a pittance ; that was how he came to be in the assembly who had gathered to hear Jarl Ossgood the Dane tell of a mystery he had unearthed whilst journeying in Thibet.

A commonplace-looking man was Jarl the Dane, a man whose rough, rugged face gave few signs of the soul that lay behind the veil of clay, but the man who sat next to him was moulded upon lines that the world seldom sees; young, black as the breast feathers of a crow, great of stature, silent as the mountain-tops at night, a man whose mere physical gifts would have compelled attention in any assemblage.

But it was not his length and breadth of limb that held the eyes of the men who sat around him, it was the majesty of intellect that nature had imprinted upon his face; so might Solomon have looked in the heyday of his glory.

The full black eyes never wavered in the steadfastness of their regard, the brow above the eyes never lowered or frowned, but rested like a rampart fronting an arsenal of intellectual force.

The great curving nose rose from between the eyes, and the full delicately turned nostrils betrayed courage and breeding; the curving lips that hid the white strong teeth were guiltless of hair, every line was visible.

An intensely human face, and yet inhuman in its inflexible calm; it was not a sullen face, nor an austere face, simply a calm unalterable living mask.

Had the soul behind that face been the soul of a sensualist or a slayer of men, he would have been a fiend, a devil stalking the earth limitless in evil.

This was the priest whom Jarl the Dane had brought with him from Thibet, the man whose mysterious power he wished a group of wise men to investigate.

Long and earnestly the Dane spoke to the little assembly, telling how, during his wanderings in Thibet, he had fallen in with the priest, who had revealed to him things which both fools and wise men had scoffed at as impossible.

"To him," said Jarl the Dane, turning with a wave of his arm towards the priest, "to him there is no such thing as death or annihilation, he has crossed the portals and has held communion with the world beyond and the people who inhabit it."

At this astounding statement every eye in that assembly was fixed upon the black immutable face of the priest. "If that is so, let him tell us what lies behind the veil."

It was the soldier who spoke, the leader of armies, and his voice had the crisp curt ring of camps in its every tone.

"That he will not do," answered the Dane; "every man must see for himself and learn his own lesson. Many may make the journey if they are willing, but only a few who are worthy will learn the higher secrets."

"Babes can babble like that, but we who are here are not babes," retorted the soldier; "we want deeds, not words; proofs, not assertions."

The priest rose from his resting-place, and, uprearing his form to its full height until he towered a full head over the soldier—and he was a man of fine stature—said—

"Deeds! you ask for deeds, you shall have them; you ask for proofs, you shall have proofs; you ask for a sign, I will give you a sign."

His voice was like the far-off echo of the sea, so full, so strong, so passionless, so great, and they who hearkened were awed.

No charlatan, no mere trickster ever spoke like that.

"You seek knowledge, the knowledge that has no ending; and knowledge waits for the earnest seeker; in my hands lie the keys that will open the gates of wisdom, but first let me tell you the conditions. The man who would know what lies beyond what men call death, must taste death. He who would know what



*Lodging-House Keeper (to Professional Lady).—“WHICH MY ’USBAND, MISS, IS ONE OF
THE VIRGINS AT THE CATHEDRAL!”*

lies beyond the grave, must first lie in the grave. First death, then burial, then the journey to the land where millions upon millions abide, then the resurrection and the return."

"You have passed through all this?" asked the soldier.

"I have passed through it all."

"How long does a man lie in the grave?"

"Until the seasons have come and gone twice."

"He will then return to his own, with the knowledge of things eternal?"

"He will come to his own again, and his knowledge will be as the knowledge of the gods."

"If you would sell your knowledge, you might reap a harvest of gold greater than any man ever possessed, priest."

"What is gold to me, soldier? I get a cup of water from the spring; a handful of corn or a cluster of grapes supplies my needs. The air is free to all; the night and the day, the sun and the stars are man's inheritance; the nearer we get to the gods, the farther we get from cities and the ways of men bred in cities."

"A man *must* go to the grave to gather the wisdom of the gods then, priest?"

"There is no other way."

A silence fell upon the group of men—deep, solemn silence, which lasted until the soldier spoke again.

"Your price is too high, priest; a man might learn that which would teach him that his life's efforts are vanity and vexation of spirit."

"A man would learn that the ambitions of men count no more in the scale of creation than the holes the earth-worms make in the clay soil by the rivers."

"Better for him if, knowing that, he never returned to humankind," cried the soldier, passionately.

The priest looked at him with that wondrous calm which nothing seemed to shake.

"You are wrong," he answered; "for when men have risen above personal ambition, and spend their lives toiling night and day for no other reward than the happiness and advancement of all humankind, then, and not until then, will the plan of man's redemption be complete. A soldier lives, dies, decays, and becomes dust; and ages after, a child with a little spittle upon its finger makes a plaything out of what had been a conqueror's clay. So much for ambition; but a good deed nobly done, germinates and begets deeds in its own likeness, —a good deed never dies."

"Your price is too high; you ask too much for your knowledge, priest."

As he spoke, the soldier passed out into the night, and all the rest followed him, until the priest was left alone with his one disciple, Jarl the Dane.

An hour later the American money-king and the "man who risked it" were closeted together, talking earnestly; the American was speaking. "I would take no living man's word on a subject of such importance until I had proved it to the bottom—no, not the word of my own brother," he said; "and yet if ever a man looked as if he could not lie, it is that priest."

"I do not believe he lies," said the other man, "I believe he spoke the truth; and yet, like you, I would not accept his bare assertion; to do so would be to exercise what the fanatics call faith. I prefer to exercise reason, and reason demands proof."

"Is there a man living, I wonder," murmured the American, "who would take such a tremendous risk as the priest demands as the price of the fruit of the tree of knowledge? Have you grasped the awful significance of this experiment?

If a man were to do as the priest demands, and if the priest proved to be no mere charlatan, no impostor, but a god-sent messenger to man, then the daring mortal would be brought into contact with forces which created the worlds, not this planet alone, but all that exist, the forces that govern it to-day. If there is a heaven he would see it, if there was a hell he would behold its terrors; think of all that it means: could a man, a mere man, gaze upon those scenes and bear to live as a man again? I would give much to meet such a man."

The other sat very silent, thinking, thinking, always thinking. He saw the woman who had given up all for him, sinking to a premature grave, worn out by life's bitter struggle.

He looked ahead a few years, and saw himself, beaten, broken, his back to the wall of fortune, his feet in the mire of defeat.

He saw the boys growing to manhood, half educated, scornful of the father who had failed, and failing left them nothing but a name, a mere empty name—and his soul sickened.

"You would give much, you say, to meet a man who would risk this thing?"

"Much."

"I will take this risk."

"*You?*"

The American leaned half across the table in his sudden excitement, "—you—impossible; why, man, the world wants you as you are."

"The world may want me, but the world will starve my wife and buffet my children. Listen"—then he told his story, whilst the money-king sat and drummed the table with his fingers.

"So," he said at the conclusion, "I am not the only one who has gone wide of the mark. I hunted for money, and am not satisfied though I have enough for any ten men living. You

hunted for fame, and having won it, find it hollow; we are like children, my friend, little children seeking strayed cattle in the dark; but you are welcome to enough of my wealth to satisfy your needs."

"Can I give you a share of my fame in return?"

The money-king shook his head and smiled. "No," he answered; "true fame is beyond the reach of dollars."

"Then as you can take nothing from me for nothing, neither can I take from you without an equivalent, that for which you have wasted a life; but if you will make my wife's future secure, make my boys' pathway smooth, I will risk this thing of which the priest spoke; and if I come back to the land of living men, will tell you all that I am allowed to tell."

So the compact was made: a soul was bought and sold, not for evil, but that good might come of it; mortals were measuring themselves with the immortal, as children measure a mountain with their eyes.

A little way off the edge of a beaten track that led through one of the jungles of Upper Burmah, four men were standing around an open grave.

One was the Thibetan priest, the man upon his left was his disciple, Jarl the Dane. On the right of the grave stood the American money-king, at the foot of the grave stood "the man who risked it."

The priest spoke, and his voice sounded like the wind rippling through the leaves.

"To-day our brother dies, and is buried here in the lap of the earth—the clean brown earth, that purifies and cleanses all that is worth cleansing, and rots all that is in itself rotten and vile. When the snows on the mountain-tops have melted twice, when the corn has ripened

and fallen twice to the sickle of the reaper, I shall stand again beside this grave and bid the sleeper awaken, and he will awake, and he shall possess knowledge that few of the sons of men have ever possessed; but first he must die, for death is the door of knowledge."

He passed along the graveside and stood close to the man whose loyal love for a woman, who was his wife and the mother of his children, made him a willing sacrifice.

"Close your eyes," he commanded, in a whisper that was full of tragedy and power; "close your eyes."

The victim obeyed.

The priest placed his right hand over the victim's mouth, with the forefinger and thumb of his left hand he closed the man's nostrils. "Do not struggle," he commanded, in the same tone he had used before. "Obey, and the anguish will be short; death comes easily, life alone is hard."

The victim's fingers twitched, his eyelids fluttered for a moment over straining eyeballs, the veins upon his neck and forehead swelled as though they would burst, his chest heaved in agony; then peace came, and he lay white and still in the arms of the priest.

If he were not dead, no man ever looked more like death.

For an hour they watched beside him, and saw the jaw fall, the eyes fix in a glassy stare, the hue of the cheeks settle into the cold dirty-white pallor of death.

The American drew his penknife and cut the index-finger of the left hand to the bone, but no blood came from the wound.

Then they buried him and heaped the clean brown mould over the uncoffined form, and left him.

The American went towards the coast and

met an epidemic of cholera; and four days after the burial of "the man who risked it," the American was thrown into a rough grave, a victim of the greatest of all the Eastern scourges.

In London a woman, surrounded by four growing boys, sat and mourned for her husband, mourned for him as a dead man.

No news had reached her concerning the terrible experiment her husband had decided to risk.

He had not written her; he had left the whole story in the hands of the American money-lender, who had promised to go straight to the wife and tell her all, and give to her the help she needed; but death had met him and closed his mouth for all time.

Special correspondents of the great "Dailies" had traced "the man who risked it" into Upper Burmah, they kept upon his track until they fell in with the cholera wave, then all traces ceased, and they, knowing nothing of the Thibetan priest and his mission, put the disappearance of the celebrity down to cholera.

He was duly chronicled as one of its victims, and his widow, who had given him of the best of her life ungrudgingly, mourned for him, and would not be comforted.

Letters came to her, from many of the world's great ones, deploring his loss. Great journals devoted much space to his untimely fate. A nation wept for him—for a day—and left his widow and children to starve, for the widow was poor; and all the time he slept under the soil in the Burmah jungle, and poverty crept into his home and dwelt there.

One by one the little knick-knacks of happier times went to the saleroom; a few pictures he had prized, mostly gifts from artists who had



A FACT.

Welsh Farmer.—"CURATE, I SUPPOSE?"

Dean (who is about to be made a Bishop, but who always travels 3rd class).—"I ONCE WAS A CURATE, MY FRIEND."

Welsh Farmer.—"DRINK, I SUPPOSE?"

known and admired him; then the more solid things went, until the home was bare, and the little that was left was seized by the landlord for rent.

Then came the dreary tramping through London slums in search of cheap lodgings, and the bitter battle for daily bread; and the skies grew greyer and greyer.

Had she been alone, death would have come to her, but the motherhood within her kept her alive; she could not die and leave the young things loveless and homeless in the world—she was too unselfish to die.

So it came to pass that in her hour of darkest need she met a man, an artist, who had been one of her husband's dearest friends, a man clever but not great; his brush and his pencil kept him in comfort, though not in wealth; and being a manly man he helped her willingly, helped her gladly, until the grosser souls around made light of her name, speaking of her as his mistress.

A cruel taunt from a boy in the street to her eldest son opened her eyes to what was said; and to keep the memory of her dead lover's name pure and free from stain, she refused all further help and prepared to seek another abiding-place—for the tongues of the wicked are cruel.

Then that friend, out of his loyal friendship, begged her to become his wife, and she, for the children's sake, consented.

The snows on the mountain-tops had melted twice, the reaper's sickle had been busy for two summers amidst the golden grain, and once more the Thibetan priest stood in the Burmese jungle beside the grave where lay the body of "the man who risked it."

Beside the priest stood Jarl Ossgood the Dane.

"His hour has come," said the priest; then kneeling, he scooped the earth away with his hands, tearing aside the weeds and brambles, throwing the brown earth to the right and left, until the face of the sleeper lay exposed to the sunlight.

It was the same face; but earth, brown mother earth, had imprinted upon it her unending calm.

The priest bent his head and whispered a command—

"Sleeper, awake! The hour has come!" And he who slept awoke, and rose up and shook the grave rags from him, for all his clothing had rotted, and the rags defiled him.

He went to a tiny rivulet that rippled near, and washed; and having washed, knew not that he was naked; and the priest bowed before him, for this man had fathomed the wisdom that lies beyond the world.

They ministered to him; but neither Jarl the Dane nor the priest asked him to share with them his knowledge—his knowledge. What knowledge had he gained? But let the story tell.

Jarl the Dane brought him clothing and placed money for his needs in his purse; and he went forth smiling graciously, smiling on all things as the spring smiles.

An aged woman met him on the highway—he stopped and comforted her; an old man bearing a burden beyond his feeble strength tottered along the road—he took the burden upon his own shoulder, and, linking his arm in that feeble wayfarer's, cried, "Come, brother, the burdens of the weak should be upon the shoulders of the strong."

Surely this man had learnt wisdom, the wisdom of the gods.

He passed from place to place, and none

knew him ; his fame had not lasted long enough to hold men's minds for two brief seasons, and yet he had been great.

But the thought brought no grief: he had learnt the value of many things since the day he had slept.

He put his stick into a running stream, and, drawing it forth, looked for the hole and found none. "And that is fame," he said, and smiled ; and went upon his journey, going straight as an eagle to its nest to that London home where his wife dwelt with his friend.

She knew him as soon as her eyes rested upon his face, and a great shame fell upon her.

He would have taken her in his arms, but she dropped at his feet and clasped her arms around him, crying, "I am not worthy ; the children hungered and I gave myself for bread."

At that he lifted her and held her in his arms and talked to her, to soothe her pain.

Then that other came, the friend who had wedded her ; and when he saw them, a great wrath filled him, for he too had learnt to love the woman with his whole soul, for she was lovable above the wont of women.

"She is mine," he cried.

"She shall choose," was the reply.

"She cannot go to you," cried that other one ; "she is soiled to you, for she has been my wife."

The man who had risked all for love looked calmly at the woman.

"Choose," he said.

"I did it all for love of you and love of my children."

"Your love was pure," he answered her ; "so pure that the world is better for your loving, and your living, perfect love purifies all it touches."

She crept to him and laid her head upon his heart with a great sigh of content.

"But the child, the unborn child, *my* child?" cried that other.

"Not *your* child," said the man who held the woman, "not your child. It is the child of your desire and her sacrifice ; and sacrifice claims its reward : it is her child."

"Come," he said. And they went.

"What have you learnt?" she asked him, when he had told her all ; "what *is* the wisdom of the gods—is it fame, is it wealth, is it power?"

And he made answer, holding her face in his hands—

"It is none of these things—wealth is nothing, fame is a summer's breath on the cheek of a stripling. The wisdom of the gods is three things : perfect content, perfect love, and perfect charity ; but the greatest of these is the love of a good woman for a selfish man."





Bill Snooks (reading from a fashion paper).—“‘TO BE REALLY WELL DRESSED A MAN’S CLOTHES SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE THE APPEARANCE OF HAVING BEEN WORN ONCE OR TWICE.’ WHAT ‘O!’”

WHAT THE RATS BROUGHT

BY

ERNEST FAVENC

IT was during the prolonged drought of 1919, just about Christmas time, that the steamer *Niagara* fell in with an apparently abandoned barquentine about fifty miles from Sydney.

It was calm, fine weather; so, failing to get any response to their hail, the chief officer boarded her.

He returned with the report that she was perfectly seaworthy and in good order, but no one could be found on the ship, living or dead.

The captain went on board, and, being so close to port, he was thinking of putting some hands on her to bring her into Port Jackson, when a perusal of the barquentine's log-book in the captain's cabin made him hesitate.

From the entries it appeared that the crew had sickened and died of some kind of malignant fever, the only survivors being three men—a passenger, one sailor, and the cook.

The last entry, which was nearly three weeks old, stated that these three had provisioned a boat and intended leaving the vessel in order to make for Australia, as the only chance of saving their lives, as they felt sure that the vessel was infested with plague.

The value of the barquentine and cargo being considerable, and the weather settled, the captain determined to take her into port.

He put three volunteers on board to steer her,

took her in tow, and brought her into Port Jackson, and anchored off the Quarantine Ground.

On reporting the matter to the medical officer, he was ordered to remain at anchor until it was decided what course to take.

The season was very hot and unhealthy, and when the story spread it occasioned a slight scare amongst the citizens.

Both vessels were quarantined, and the barquentine thoroughly examined.

When it was found from the log that the deserted craft had sailed from an Indian port, where the plague that had so long devastated Southern Asia was then raging furiously, the consternation grew into a panic.

It was determined to take the vessel to sea and burn her, for nothing less would pacify the public.

The claim of the owners and the salvage claim for compensation were rated, and the *Niagara* towed the derelict out to sea, set fire to her, and then returned to undergo a term of quarantine.

Nothing further occurred, and in due course the *Niagara* was released, and the people forgot the fright they had entertained.

The drought reigned unbroken, and the heat continued to range higher than ever.

Then, when the winter had passed, and the dry spring betokened the coming of another

summer of drought and heat, a mortal sickness made its appearance in some of the low-lying suburbs of Sydney.

When it had grown to an alarming extent, grim stories got to be bruited about, and a tale that one of the sailors of the *Niagara* had told was repeated.

He was on watch the night before the vessel was to be destroyed, the two ships lying anchored pretty close together.

It was about two o'clock when his attention was drawn to a peculiar noise on board the plague ship.

He listened intently, and recognised the squealing of rats, and a low, pattering noise as though all the rats on the ship were gathering together.

And so they were.

By the light of the moon his quick eyes detected something moving on the cable.

The rats were leaving the ship.

Down the cable they went in what seemed to be an endless procession, into the water, and straight ashore they swam.

They passed under the bow of the *Niagara*,

* * * * *

The weather is still unchanged.

It seems as though a cloud would never appear in the sky again.

Day after day the thermometer rises during the afternoon to 115 degrees in the shade, with unvarying regularity.

No wind comes, save puffs of hot air, which penetrate everywhere.

The Harbour is lifeless, and the water seems stagnant and rotting.

And now, dead bodies are floating in what were once the clear sparkling waters of Port Jackson.

Most of these are the corpses of unfortunates,

and the sailor declared it seemed nearly half an hour before the last straggler swam past.

He lost sight of them in the shadow of the shore, but he heard the curious subdued murmur they made for some time.

The sailor little thought, as he watched this strange exodus from the doomed ship, that he had witnessed an invasion of Australia portending greater disaster than the entrance of a hostile fleet through the Heads.

The horror of the tale was augmented by the fact that the suburbs afflicted were now haunted by numberless rats.

People began to fly from the neighbourhood, and soon some of the most populous districts were empty and deserted.

This spread the evil, and before long plague was universal in the city, and the authorities and their medical advisers at their wits' end to cope with and check the scourge.

The following account is from the diary of one who passed unscathed through the affliction. Strange to say, none of the crew of the *Niagara* were attacked, nor was the boat with the three survivors ever heard of.

* * * * *

stricken with plague-madness, who, in their delirium, plunge into the water, which has a fatal fascination for them.

They float untouched, for it is reported, and I believe with truth, that the very sharks have deserted these tainted shores.

The sanitary cordon once drawn around the city has long since been abandoned, for the plague now rages throughout the whole continent.

The very birds of the air seem to carry the infection far and wide.

All steamers have stopped running, for they dare not leave port, in case of being disabled at sea by their crews sickening and dying.

All the ports of the world are closed against Australian vessels.

Ghastly stories are told of ships floating around our coasts, drifting hither and thither, manned only by the dead.

Our sole communication with the outer world is by cable, and that even is uncertain, for some of the land operators have been found dead at the instruments.

The dead are now beginning to lie about the streets, for the fatigue-parties are over-worked, and the cremation furnaces are not yet available.

Yesterday I was in George Street, and saw three bodies lying in the Post Office Colonnade. Dogs were sniffing at them; and the horrible rats that now infest every place ran boldly about.

There is no traffic but the death-carts, and the silence of the once noisy street is awful.

The only places open for business are the bars; for many hold that alcohol is a safeguard against the plague, and drink to excess, only to die of heat-apoplexy.

People who meet look curiously at each other, to see if either bear the plague blotch on their face.

Religious mania is common.

The Salvation Army parade the streets praying and singing.

The other day I saw, when kneeling in a circle, that two of them never rose again. They remained kneeling, smitten to death by the plague.

The "captain" raised a cry of "Hallelujah! More souls for Jesus!" and then the whole crew, in their gaudy equipments, went marching down the echoing street, the big drum banging its loudest.

As the noise of their hysterical concert faded round a corner a death-cart rumbled up, and the two victims were unceremoniously pitched into it, one of the men remarking, "They're fresh 'uns this time, better luck!"

Such was the requiem passed on departed spirits by those whose occupation had long since made them callous to suffering and death.

All the medical profession stuck nobly to their posts, though death was busy amongst their ranks; and volunteers amongst the nurses, male and female, were never wanting as places had to be filled.

But what could medical science do against a disease that recognised no conventional rules, and raged in the open country as it did in the crowded towns?

Experts from Europe and America came over and sacrificed their lives, and still no check could be found.

All agreed that the only chance was in an atmospheric disturbance that would break up the drought and dispel the stagnant atmosphere that brooded like a funeral pall over the continent.

But the meteorologists could give no hope.

All they could say was that a cycle of rainless years had set in, and that at some former time Australia had passed through the same experience.

A strange comet, too, of unprecedented size, had made its appearance in the Southern Hemisphere, and astronomers were at a loss to account for the visitor.

So the fiery portent flamed in the midnight sky, further adding to the terrors of the superstitious.

It was during one night, walking late through the stricken city, I met with the following adventure.



P. H. May
1902

Young Actor.—"HULLO! GUV'NOR. DOING ANYTHING?"

Old Stager.—"NO, MY BOY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I'VE DONE NOTHING SINCE POOR MAC DIED!"

Young Actor.—"MAC? WHAT MAC? MACDERMOTT?"

Old Stager.—"NO! *MACREADY!* YOU BLOOMING MUSHROOM!!"

My work at the hospitals had been hard, but I felt no fatigue. The despair brooding over everyone had shadowed me with its influence.

Think what it was to be shut up in a pest-city without a chance of escape, either by sea or by land!

I wandered through the streets, Campbell's lines running in my head, "And ships were drifting with the dead to shores where all was dumb."

Suddenly a door opened, and a young woman staggered out, and reeling, almost fell against me.

I supported her, and she seemed to somewhat recover from the frightful horror that had apparently seized her.

She stared at me, then said, "Oh! I can stand it no longer. The rats came first, and now hideous things have come through the window, and are watching his breath go out. Are you a doctor?"

"I am not a doctor," I answered; "but I'm one of those who attend to the dying. It is all we can do."

"Will you come with me? My husband is dying, and I dare not go back alone, and I dare not leave him to die alone. He has raved of fearful things."

The street lamps were unlighted, but by the glare of the threatening comet that lit up the heavens I could see her face, and the mortal terror in it.

I was just reassuring her when someone approaching stopped close to us.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the stranger, who was frenzied with drink; "another soul going to be damned. Let me see him. I'll cheer him on his way," and he waved a bottle of whiskey.

I turned to remonstrate with the fellow, when I saw a change come over his face that trans-

formed it from frenzy of intoxication into comparative sobriety.

"Your name, woman; your husband's name?" he gasped.

As if compelled to answer, she replied, "Sandover, Herbert Sandover?"

"Can I come too?" said the man, addressing me in an altered tone. "I know Herbert, knew him of old; but his wife doesn't remember me."

"Keep quiet, and don't disturb the dying," I said; and giving my arm to the woman, went into the house.

We ascended the stairs and entered a bedroom; the rats scampered, squeaking, before us.

On the bed lay a man, plague-stricken, and raving in delirium.

No wonder.

On the rail at the head of the bed and on the rail at the foot sat two huge bats.

Not the harmless Australian variety that lives in the twilight limestone caves; nor the fruit-eating flying-fox; but a larger kind still, the hideous flesh-feeding vampire of New Guinea and Borneo.

For since Australia became a pest-house the flying carnivora of the Archipelago had invaded the continent.

There sat these demon-like creatures, with their vulpine heads and huge leathery wings, with which they were slowly fanning the air.

And the dying man lay and raved at them.

Disturbed by our entrance, the obscene things flapped slowly out of the open window, and the sick man turned to us with a hideous laugh, which was echoed by the strange man who had joined us.

"Herbert Sandover," he said, "you know me, Bill Kempton, the man you robbed and

ruined. I'm just in time to see you die. I came to Australia after you to twist your thievish neck, but the Plague has done it. Grin, man, grin, it's pleasant to meet an old friend."

I tried to stop him, but vainly; and from the look on the dying man's face I could see that it was a case of recognition in reality.

The woman had sunk upon her knees and buried her head in her hands.

Kempton still continued his mad taunting. Taking a tumbler from the table he poured some whiskey into it, and drank it.

"This is the stuff to keep the plague away," he shouted; "but you, Sandover, never drank. Oh no! too clever for that. Spoil your nerve for cheating. But I'll live, you cur, and see you tumbled into the death-cart."

So he raved at the dying man, and one of the great vampires came back and perched on the window-sill.

Raising himself in bed by a last effort, Sandover fixed his eyes on the thing, and screamed that it should not come for him before his time.

As if incensed by his gestures, the vampire suddenly sprang fiercely at him, uttering a whistling snarl of rage.

Fixing its talons in him and burying its teeth in his neck, it commenced worrying the poor wretch and buffeting him with its wings.

Calling to Kempton, I rushed forward to try and beat it off, but its mate suddenly appeared. Quite powerless to aid, I picked up the woman, who had fainted, and carried her out of the room.

Kempton, now quite mad, continued fighting the vampires, but at last, torn and bleeding, he followed us into the street.

I was endeavouring to restore the woman, and he only stopped to assure me that the

devils were eating Sandover, and then reeled off.

When the woman came to her senses I left her by her own request, to wait till the Death-Cart came round.

I called there the next morning, but never saw her again.

Amidst such sights and scenes as these the summer passed on, burning and relentless.

The cattle and sheep were dying in hundreds and thousands, and it looked as though Australia would soon be a lifeless waste, and ever to remain so.

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One morning it was pasted up that news had come from Eucla that the barometer there gave notice of an atmospheric disturbance approaching from the south-west.

That was all, and no more could be elicited.

The line-men at the next station started to ascertain the cause of the silence; and after a few days they wired to say that they had found the men on the station all dead.

But the self-registering instruments had continued their work, and the storm was daily expected from Cape Leuwin.

The days preceding our deliverance from the pest were some of the worst experienced; as though the approaching storm drove before it all the foul-brooding vapours that had so long oppressed us, and they had assembled to make a last stand on the East coast.

One morning I felt a change, a cool change in the air.

Going into the street, I saw, to my surprise, many people there, gathered together in groups, and gazing upwards at a strange sight.

The vampires were leaving the city.

Ceaseless columns of them were flying eastward, and men watched them with relieved

faces, as though a dream of maddening horror was passing away.

Then came a sound such as must have been heard in the quaint old city of legendary lore when the piper sounded his magic flute.

The pest rats were flying.

Forth they came, unheeding the people who stood about; and Eastward they commenced their march.

All that day it continued, and some reported that they plunged into the sea and disappeared.

At anyrate, they vanished utterly, and with them other loathsome vermin that had been fattening on the dead and the living dead.

Everyone seemed to see new life ahead.

Men spoke cheerily to each other of adopting means of clearing and cleansing the city, but that work was taken out of their hands.

That night the cyclonic storm that had raged across the continent burst upon us. All the long-dormant forces of the air seemed to have met in conflict.

For three days its fury was appalling. The violent rain and constant thunder and lightning added to the tumult.

No one stirred out during those three days of tempest and destruction.

Nature in her own mighty way had set to work to purge the country of the plague.

It was while this storm was at its fiercest that the Post Office tower and the Town Hall tower were shattered and hurled in ruins to the

* * * * *

Of what followed, your histories tell you.

How the overwhelming disaster knit the states together in a closer federation than legislators ever had forged.

How from that hour sprung forth a new, purged, and purified Australian race.

ground. No one, so far as I know, witnessed the catastrophe.

The morning of the fourth day broke calm, clear, and beautiful.

At midnight the tempest had lulled; and when daylight came, the sun rose in a sky lightly flecked with roseate morning clouds.

Accompanied by a friend, I started out to see the ruined city, and those who were left alive in it.

The streets still ran with flood-water, but the higher levels had pretty well drained off; and once they were gained, our progress was easy.

Martin Place was choked with the ruins of the tower, and many other buildings that had succumbed; while not a single verandah was left standing in any street. We went to the Harbour.

The tide was receding, carrying with it the turbid waters that rushed into it from all points; carrying with it, too, wreckage and human bodies.

A strong current was setting seaward through the Heads, and bore out to the Pacific all the decaying remnants of the past visitation.

The deserted ships in the Harbour had been torn from their moorings and either sunk or blown ashore.

Wreck and desolation were visible everywhere, but the air was pure, cool, and grateful; and our hearts rose in spite of the difficulties that lay before us, for the looming horror of the plague had been lifted.

* * * * *

All this is the record of the Australian nation; mine are but some reminiscences of a time of horror unparalleled, which no man anticipated would have visited the Southern Continent.

PHIL MAY



Condoling Friend (to recently Bereaved Widower).—“IT MUST BE AWFULLY HARD TO LOSE ONE’S WIFE!”

The Bereaved.—“YES —, IT’S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE!”

TWO BLUE EYES AND ANANIAS

BY

HAROLD WHITE

THE hall of the Hotel Northumberland is noted beyond all others in London for the variety of its visitors and of its styles of architecture.

Half an hour's session in one of its saddlebag armchairs will show you inhabitants of most of the kingdoms of the earth, and all its republics, and the unprohibited cigar will help you to philosophise over the different kinds of men manufactured by the different kinds of manners.

There, too, the student of human nature finds an admirable field for practising his powers of diagnosis on his fellow-man, and deducing from the shape of his nose and his boots his walk in life and his share in all the virtues.

It may be that it is as fallacious to judge from appearances as it is unjust to judge from disappearances, still, reliant on his Schopenhauer, and self-confident because he never, as a rule, finds out whether he is right or wrong, he persistently turns his specimens with his mental forceps.

I feel to-day, for certain reasons, that it is a propensity which should be checked, but yesterday I felt no restraint in indulging it, the object of my attention and my curiosity, from mere laziness, being my immediate neighbour.

He was English—from the Midlands, I think—but obviously and aggressively English, his nationality a flung gauntlet.

The stability of his after-luncheon attitude, his self-absorbed silence, the fact that he let his daughter get up and put away his coffee-cup, were incontestible proofs.

The last proof was also evidence of a graceful figure and a pretty frock.

Some people would think their owner pretty too.

I did myself; so, I think, did a young American who sat over by the flower-stall, looking like all the impersonators of Harry Bronson rolled into one.

I gathered it from the intense gloom with which he regarded her as she bestowed an impartial allowance of attention upon her novel and the world in general. For myself, I was, I hope not importunately, part of the world in general.

Apart, however, from mere prettiness, there was a steadfastness about the fresh young lips, and a serenity in the forget-me-not eyes, that suggested that their owner breathed a purer mental atmosphere than the worldlings round her, while a plaintive rather than painful look that sometimes passed across her face, showed that sorrow and regret were not entirely strangers.

The father—it was the father I was observing—having finished his cigar, and without waiting to see if his daughter had finished her chapter, arose and bore her off.

His gesture as he did so was sultanlic, and gave a hint of the charming creature's life immured and shackled by parental jealousy.

I felt that her father he would lock the door, and her mother, if existent, would keep the key, and the thought aroused my ire.

I think that a similar reflection aroused the ire of the young American, for he glanced round to find the crowded hall a solitude, shook his tawny locks, and stalked dismally away.

I daresay he only went to get a whiskey cocktail, or whatever they drink, but from his expression of noble fortitude it might have been the cup of hemlock.

Now it happens that the theatrical advertisements are over against the flower-stall, and I wanted to look at the theatrical advertisements.

So it was that I occupied the seat vacated by the young American.

I had barely discovered that it takes four men to remember enough jokes to make up the words of a comic opera, exclusive of the gag, when one of the hotel pages came up to me and handed me a book.

"What's this?" I asked, with surprise. So little is given away in this world.

"Book, sir. Lady sent it."

I looked at it and recognised it.

The flaming red design on the khaki cover was unmistakable.

It was the book which belonged to the girl with the forget-me-not eyes. But why had she sent it? Youth, the flatterer, has deserted me for a decade, and I am not unconscious of a growing forehead. The answer evaded me.

Before I could get a question ready the boy had started on his business in life, which happened to be flourishing a telegram round the hall and bawling "One-naught-two," and I was left with the book in my hand.

The deserting flatterer, Youth, had a momentary impulse to return, but I dismissed him peremptorily and applied logic to the case.

What are books for?

To be read.

I would therefore read the book, and so I took out my *pince-nez*.

The opening chapter introduced me to a familiar character, the girl who has to go as a companion to an old lady in the country, and cannot see why the son and the neighbouring baronet are so attentive.

She says she thinks that she's quite ordinary, but I mistrust that girl's disavowals.

I think she does know why.

My grasp of the subject was rather elusive, because for some reason or other I could not help picturing the girl as having forget-me-not eyes, although she distinctly stated in more than one passage that they were dark.

Finally, I gave it up and began turning over the pages.

Then I discovered that three of them were turned down, and on one of those turned down were some words faintly—almost one would think unintentionally—underlined.

They were at the beginning of a chapter describing the transference of the business to town.

"It was four o'clock in the afternoon," so ran the legend, "and the Park was as yet deserted. The chairs by the Achilles Statue had barely a dozen occupants."

The words underlined—one could just see the pencil-mark—were "four o'clock," "Park," and "Achilles Statue."

I put the book down. The thing was clear—that is, clear to a student of human nature.

This charming girl needed a friend, and something chivalrous in my bearing had made her choose out me.

She was being coerced into some hateful marriage or was being otherwise ill-treated by that stolid parent (I awaited further details), and timidly and with reluctance she had asked my assistance.

There was a maidenly reserve about the trinity of those turned-down pages and the faintness of those pencil-marks which no true-hearted Englishman could resist.

It was three o'clock. I had just time to have my hat ironed and my boots cleaned.

On my return from the nether regions of the shaving saloon, I marked the young American in his former chair, and I saw that he was reading the khaki volume with an air of excited interest.

I thought it distinctly impertinent of him.

The book was not his.

The legend ran true. The Park is almost deserted at four. The seats beneath the Achilles Statue had barely a dozen occupants, one of whom was easily recognisable as the damsel in distress.

She was looking on the ground as I approached, and did not see me till I said—

"I am sorry to say I have lost your book."

Then she looked up with an innocent wonder in her blue eyes and said—

"My book?"

"Yes," I said; "it is a pity. It was so interesting."

She looked embarrassed, and I felt that I had been *gauche* in alluding to her signal for succour.

"Indeed! What was there interesting in it?"

I sat down by her side.

"It told me that I might be of assistance to you," I said.

Except that she glanced nervously to each side, at the moment she did not look particularly like a maiden in urgent need of help.

"How?" she asked, with downcast eyes.

"In any way that is possible," I said.

There was a pause implying hesitation in asking a stranger's help.

"Shall you be at the Northumberland this evening?" she asked.

I replied that I would.

"Then in case I want you to, will you tell papa that you met me this afternoon at Ealing?" she said, rising.

"But I didn't."

"Of course not; but I shouldn't like papa to think that I wasn't at Ealing this afternoon."

Her manner simply suggested kindly consideration for her parent; so I said—

"I understand."

"Remember," she said, "at my aunt's, Mrs. Beaton's, at Ealing. You might say that I missed the earlier train home."

The calm serenity of her blue eyes convinced me somehow that if I did, I should simply be narrating a fact.

Any inconvenience arising from questions as to the identity, appearance, and residence of Mrs. Beaton did not at the moment occur to me.

She overpaid me with a smile of gratitude, and I felt as though I was sharing some beneficent work with an angel.

The smile, however, rapidly changed into a look of consternation as she gazed down the Row.

My eye followed hers until it lighted on the young American, who was advancing in our direction.

Although he was still some distance off, I could see that the shadow of settled gloom was still upon his brow, and that he had sought to enlighten his frock-coated sobriety by a pair of gleaming yellow boots.

The blue-eyed girl gasped "Good gracious," and her eyes blinked at the boots.



“DO YOU KNOW IT’S VERY WRONG FOR LITTLE BOYS TO SMOKE TOBACCO?”

“’OO ARE YER CALLIN’ A LITTLE BOY? BESIDES, IT AIN’T TERBAKKER AT ALL, IT’S A CIGAR!”

Then she surveyed me rapidly from head to heel.

"After all," she began, thoughtfully.

"What after all?" I asked.

"If you do want to help me—"

"I am dying to," I said with fervour.

"You can do so by pretending to be papa for a few minutes."

"Papa?"

"Yes; you were sitting together after lunch, and he won't know who was which."

"But—"

"S'sh. He's coming. Do you think that you could glare a little bit?"

I never felt more like glaring in my life. Papa, indeed!

The young man was upon us with a look of mingled wrath and expectation on his face, and with a hand half raised towards his hat brim. I heard myself somewhat loudly addressed as "Papa, dear," and I obtained a side view of the pleading look which my blue-eyed maiden bestowed on the young man.

It said loudly, "Do not recognise me, or I shall arouse my stony parent's wrath."

The young man's ochre feet, shocking the gravel path, faltered slowly on.

"Hang it—" I said.

"S'sh," she broke in, putting a plump gloved hand upon my sleeve. "He's coming back"; and I was again "papa."

I watched the young man's bewildered exit through a stream of carriages, and turned to the lady with some anger.

"So it was that that young man that you sent the book," I said.

"What book?"

"That khaki book with the red spots. You know perfectly well what I mean," I said, severely.

She looked hurt.

"You had the book," she said; "you must have given it to him. I did not."

I did not stop to rake out the fallacy that must have been somewhere.

"Do you know the young man?" I asked.

"He was most kind yesterday in finding my parasol."

"H'm, and to-day because he happens to have a pair of—"

"Nonsense," she broke in. "Don't you see that it would not have been right for me to have met him? We have never been really introduced. Besides," she added, swinging her parasol pensively, "I don't see why you should mind."

"But papa?" I said, hardening my heart.

"That was only to him," she said, softly.

"And to you—?" I ventured.

"To me— Oh, botheration! Here come the Medicotts."

"And who the deuce are the Medicotts?" I asked. At the moment I had no need of any Medicotts.

"They come from near us," she answered. "She is the local scandalmonger. . . . Yes, I knew they would come and talk. You said that you would help me. You will, won't you? You must be my uncle. My uncle from Australia."

"I can't," I said; "I've never—"

But before my protestations could be heard, she was shaking hands effusively, and her fresh young voice was exclaiming with surprise—

"What! don't you know my Uncle Joseph from Australia?"

Mrs. Medicott fastened upon me, and by dexterous probings obtained from me a detailed account of my residence, my wife, my family, and my voyage home.

She seemed much pleased with what she heard, but there was a somewhat curious look in her eye as she said—

“I’ve often heard of Uncle Joseph in Australia, but I always gathered that he was a bachelor. Your fifteen-year-old boy—Ronald I think you said was his name—must have come as rather a surprise to the people at Haughton.”

At that moment my companion said, “Come along, Uncle Joseph,” and we were free of the Medicotts.

When we were alone I heaved a sigh, half of relief and half of exasperation, as I turned to meet the look of innocent inquiry in the girl’s eyes.

“My dear lady,” I said, “this is positively too—too outrageous. You leave me, without a single fact to go upon, to the most inquisitive woman I have ever seen, to represent your Uncle Joseph for ten minutes. I have the strongest objection to telling falsehoods. I look upon it as an abominable practice—and I don’t do it well.”

“But I have an Uncle Joseph, and he does come from Australia,” said the girl, with a pretty, puzzled look.

“But I am not your Uncle Joseph, and I don’t come from Australia,” I said, sulkily.

“There is that in it,” she agreed.

“And here have I been taking unto myself a wife and three children, the eldest being Ronald, who is to try and get into the army.”

“Why on earth did you do that?” she asked, quite vexed.

“I had to have a shred of past somehow. You left me absolutely destitute.”

“It would have been so much safer to be a bachelor,” she said. “However shall I explain it when I meet them again? I know, I shall say that it was one of your jokes. I’ll sort of

pretend that Uncle Joseph is full of jokes. You see, you have let me in for quite a lot of fibs.”

It was more than I could bear.

“I have let you in—”

“Oh, don’t be cross,” she said. “It is so ungrateful of you. I am ready to spend the whole afternoon with you. First we’ll have tea, and then—dear me, how unlucky we are. Here are the Dixons.”

“One moment,” I said. “Remember this. I absolutely and entirely refuse to be any more of your elderly relations. It’s most unsuitable. I am altogether too young and innocent to be anything of the kind.” She smiled sweetly at me, and then at the approaching Dixons.

“All right,” she said. “You shan’t. You shall be Cousin Alfred this time. He’s at Oxford.”

“It’s absurd. I—” I began to protest.

“H’sh,” she broke in; and the next thing I gathered among the greetings was, “My Cousin Alfred. You must have met him, surely. He’s down from Oxford for the day.”

I am afraid that the Miss Dixon who turned to greet me encountered a look of speechless indignation.

The words were on my lips to loudly testify before them all that I was not a Cousin Alfred, and that I was not down from Oxford for the day, but one glance at the blue-eyed girl chatting easily on sapped all my courage.

She would say that I was only joking, and she looked as though she could not tell a lie.

My Miss Dixon began to question me.

She was trying to make me feel “at home,” with what success can be imagined. Still, as I was in for it, I tried to act my part.

I called Rugby football “Rugger”: in fact I believe I said “Ekker” and “Brekker” too by way of adding verisimilitude to my narrative. I

plastered my conversation with "the Broad" and "the High" and "Carfax," and told her that my tutor was a "Rotter."

I told her all the tales I had ever heard of scoring off deans and pastors as exploits of my own. I racked my memory for forgotten slang.

Still I could see that I was not convincing. There was a look of surprise and bewilderment in her eyes, which in vain I tried to banish.

I know now that my efforts to resume the gay irresponsibility of youth must have made me look ridiculous; and I suspected that it was so even at the time, but I felt that I was obliged to drive that look away.

We walked on, and never had I dreamed of the Row as such an interminable vista before; but at last there came a respite for me in my efforts.

It had been suggested in front that we should all stroll back to Bond Street and have tea, and I found myself again for a moment by the side of the girl with the forget-me-not eyes.

"I say," I whispered, "I can't keep this up much longer."

"You do look exhausted," she said. "What's the matter?"

"This undergraduate business. This trying to be youthful has taken years off my life."

She looked at me, and the laughter bubbled up.

"You don't mean to say," she said, "that you have been pretending to be an undergraduate?"

The nearness of the others compelled me to repress my indignation into a husky whisper.

"Haven't I been making an ass of myself for twenty minutes in order to represent, at your request, your Cousin Alfred down from Oxford for the day? Haven't I told that girl that I

was ploughed in Mods? Haven't I said that I row 'five' in my College eight? What is his infernal College, and what does he do to waste his time? I must have some facts to go upon."

"But he's not an undergraduate at all. It's too funny of you," she replied, with stifled laughter.

"Not an undergraduate?"

"Of course not. He's a don."

"It is enough," I said. "I've been your father and your Uncle Joseph and your Cousin Alfred, but there it ends. I refuse to be any other relative of yours whatsoever."

"Not even a brother?" she asked, with her head on one side.

"Not a—nothing at all," I said, hastily, and fled.

In the hour of danger it is good to be brave—it is better to be absent.

The hall of the Northumberland was still a hive of drones when I entered it again.

In the distance I marked the face of the father, and the back of the man who conversed with him I could swear was Mr. Medlicott's.

Therefore I took the other way, but only for a step or two.

In my path was the young American.

His brow was still stern beneath his uncut hair, but his manner breathed the nervous energy of his race.

"Sir, excuse me," he said.

I had to. There was something glittering about his eye.

"You are the father of the loveliest of her sex," he said.

"Well?" I remarked.

"My name is Hilderbrand Hook," he said, and produced a card with a quickness suggestive of a conjurer.



Phil M

H.M.S. "FURIOUS."

"Yes?" was all that I could say.

"I come from Thomson City. I have cabled to one of our leading citizens for a description of myself and how I stand there."

"Indeed?" I said, with gathering amazement.

"On the receipt of the reply, if satisfactory, have I your permission to pay my suit to your daughter?"

"What?" I faintly uttered.

"Have I your permission to pay my suit to your daughter?"

"Eh, oh yes. Certainly, by all means," I murmured.

"Sir, as her parent I respect you," he said. My hand was desperately shaken and he was gone.

I now understand why the American is monopolising the markets of the world.

It was nearing the dinner hour, and I went up to dress with a dazed feeling that I was somebody else.

It was the father's coat I took off, Uncle Joseph's braces I buttoned, and Cousin Alfred's tie I tied.

I was still absent-minded as I descended in the lift, and that was why, I suppose, I found myself within twenty feet of the blue-eyed girl and her father.

The father's face had a heated, incredulous expression, while the girl was expostulating with an air of sweet reasonableness.

I gathered that the subject of conversation was the Ealing visit.

Suddenly she saw me, and drew her father's attention triumphantly in my direction.

The reason of it flashed upon me. I was to prove that I had seen her there, and my brain reeled as I recognised my entire forgetfulness of the name of that aunt.

I thought of a directory of names, but no one of them was the right one, and in a brief second bewilderment gave place to despair.

Rescue, however, was at hand. From the telephone box, a god from the machine, issued the young American.

He did not see me, but he saw the girl. There was a partial lifting of the gloom from his brow, and his bearing was full of confidence and triumph as he stalked towards her, with the khaki volume in his hand.

A momentary look of consternation appeared in the forget-me-not eyes, only to be succeeded by a steely glance of non-recognition.

But the undaunted American advanced and bowed with the devotion of a Raleigh and the grace of an amateur actor.

"I have your father's permission to address you," I heard him say.

The girl raised her pretty eyebrows, and the father's astonishment gave way to rubicund colour.

"No, sir. You have not," he spluttered.

"How?" said the American.

"There must be some mistake," murmured the ice-maiden.

"Mistake, sir!" snapped the father, glaring.

The American looked vaguely round for all his gods, with a prayer for understanding—and found me.

Before I could escape he had clutched my arm and brought me forward.

"Will you very kindly explain to this gentleman," he said, "that I have your permission to address this young lady."

But the father was occupied. Round him were two Medicotts and a Dixon.

At first I thought it was a miracle, but I subsequently discovered that the Medicotts were staying in the hotel, which is the resort of

that particular kind of Midlander, and that the young Dixon must have come wandering in search of those forget-me-not eyes.

The girl, who wore an expression admirably suggestive of surprise and bewilderment, broke in—

“But that is not my father.”

“Not your father?” faltered the American; and Mr. Medicott, watch in hand, for they were going out to dinner and were late, joined us.

“Ah, Mr. Medicott,” said the girl, “you can set these doubts at rest. Is this gentleman my father?”

“Your father!” said Mr. Medicott; “bless my soul, no; he’s—”

“Of course he isn’t,” said the girl, serenely.

Mrs. Medicott had said good-bye to the father, and was summoning her husband away.

“When your Uncle Joseph comes to Staffordshire, he must come to see us,” said he; and turning to me, added, “I hope to see you, sir.”

The father looked puzzled, and the girl, catching the look, broke in—

“But he is not my Uncle Joseph.”

“What?” said Mr. Medicott, gazing at me with astonishment over his spectacles. “Not your Uncle Joseph?”

“Come, Mr. Dixon,” said the young lady, with a little rippling laugh, “clear us up. Is this my Uncle Joseph from Australia?”

Mr. Dixon was a hearty young man, and he dutifully laughed a hearty laugh.

“Why, of course not. Ha, ha.”

Mr. Medicott’s eyebrows went up, and the questions bubbled to his lips, but his wife’s sternly beckoning finger summoned him gasping away.

“Why, he’s—” began Mr. Dixon; but the girl was too quick for him.

“Father,” she said, pointing to me, “this is

the gentleman I met at Aunt Mary’s this afternoon.”

“Indeed?” said the father. “You met my daughter at Ealing this afternoon?”

“Yes,” I stammered.

I saw the young American looking as though his reason had received a final shock, and the eyes of Mr. Dixon growing slowly round.

“You know my sister well?” pursued the father, with that sudden change from the glaring to the genial which takes place in the Englishman when a stranger is promoted to acquaintanceship with himself.

“Not very well,” I replied.

Then seizing the only loophole for escape from further questions which must inevitably discover my total ignorance of the sister’s name, I said to the girl—

“I am afraid that you missed your train.”

She rewarded my blushing mendacity with a smile of gratitude, but my eye could only wander furtively towards the working features of that young American and the frowning perplexity of Mr. Dixon.

“Yes, wasn’t it a nuisance? It made me so late.”

“You will join us at dinner?” asked the father.

“No, no,” I said. “Certainly not—I mean, I am sorry to say I am engaged.”

I watched the girl go with her father into the dining-room, still serenely smiling, and then I turned and saw the faces of the young American and Mr. Dixon.

A glance showed me that each had much, much too that was unpleasant, to say, but that neither knew quite how to begin, and the moment of hesitation gave me time to reach the lift.

I did not appear again that night.



Bridget.—“SHURE, MUM, IS *THOT* THE TORTOISE AS YE’VE LOST ALL THESE TOIMES?
SAINTS PRESERVE US. OI’VE BEEN BREAKIN’ COKE WID-UT ALL THE WINTER!”

MESHED AT BANNISTER'S

BY

ROBERT BROTHERS

TWO fishermen stood on Bannister's Beach and watched their net floating almost within reach of their hands.

The water was silent, suppressed, and treacherous; instead of roaring amid spume and curling breakers on Bannister's, the water gurgled and rose and fell like oil, and a few yards out there were thick and slow swirls and eddies as if it were a flooded creek of thin liquid gum.

The sand did not shelve into the sea, but dropped in a short step where the waves touched.

On such a sea the corks rose and fell, stretching sinuously in part and bunched in part, and not one loop or cord came near enough for the men to grasp it.

The men kept pace with the net as the terrible undercurrent bore their property into the jagged rocks in the corner.

They were both natural sea-workers.

One, a half-caste, had been born and reared by the rocks.

He had run, as a child, to his mother to pick out the sea-eggs from his feet, as other children run with a splinter.

As a boy he had chased out the storm breakers to pick up the pippies before the wave came back.

He had gone boating on a sheet of bark and speared the sole and sand mullet with a spear

made out of the grass-tree, and lived as a child should live whose bread must be gained out of the waters.

He worked with the white; but he lived and his heart was with the black people.

The other was sailor and fisherman both.

But women and drink were on shore, and he could not drag himself farther on an ocean than it was safe for a schnapper boat to venture.

They knew the sea, but they had made one mistake that day.

Out on Bannister's the fish had teemed, and they risked a haul where never a net had been shot before.

They knew the treachery of the water, but that day the sea had been calm, and Bannister's was the calmest beach of them all.

The half-caste had stood on the sand and held the line while the white man shot the net; and when it was a quarter out, the furious noise of the roller made one man aware that the net was being caught out of the boat by the current.

He threw over his kedge and gripped the net, and so both men clung, whilst the current seemed to be dragging them into the sea.

"Can you hold on, Benery?" shouted the white man.

"It is dragging my arms out of the sockets,"

said the half-caste. "Throw the net over and come to my end."

The sweat had been streaming down their faces, the muscles stood out in knots on their arms: and the white man knew that they could not hold out, so he threw over the net and pulled ashore;—but before he reached Benery the net was gone.

It was more than human strength could do, to battle with that ocean strength which actually conquered its very rollers as they came sweeping in.

"We'll never save the net, Alick!" he said.

The white man knew it; but they stood and watched it drag slowly on, and they kept pace with its progress—hoping that what the sea had taken it might in a freak give back.

It was only a net; but God and the fishermen alone know what hardships the fisherman must undergo to buy a net,—the long, cold night hauls and wretchedness and discomfort of wet clothes; the sting of stinger and catfish; the slow saving of little earnings from their hard-won fish.

Alick knew that he was ruined with the loss of his net.

He knew the danger of that oil-like water, and he dared not reach out; so he watched it as a hungry man looks at food through plate-glass.

Out at sea a bigger wave than usual came sweeping boldly in.

As it encountered the current it staggered, but still came on; and at last threw the water into commotion as it broke very close to the shore.

Then one loop of the net seemed to come within arm's length.

The white man yielded: he dashed forward, and reached out his arm.

The water is round his waist, and the sand crumbling; yet there is time to get back.

But the net is only an inch or two away, and he makes one more clutch.

Then the sand breaks beneath him; the undertow draws him forward, and in a second he is being wound round by the clinging cords of the net.

He is *meshed*.

A cold sweat breaks out on his forehead, and his heart seems to drop into a vacant place.

He is bound hand and foot, and can feel himself drifting up the way the net drifted, up into the jagged rocks.

The net will keep up; but he will be dragged down as a man would be sucked into a quicksand.

"Save me, Benery!" he gasped.

"How?"

"Get the boat, curse you! That's how."

The half-caste stood hesitatingly.

"For the love of Jesus, Benery, hurry! Do something, or I'm a dead man."

"I know," said Benery, still standing in the one spot.

"Oh, curse you for a half-caste dog! Will you never stir? Am I to lie here like a jew-fish till I'm sucked under? Do something! Do something!! Do something!!!"

Each word was spoken louder than the last, until the last were screamed.

His head and part of his shoulders were held up by a mass of corks; but beneath him was the force of a racing current, and the meshes, twisted round his toes, were tugging to get him under.

He knew, and Benery knew, that once he was drawn down he would never rise again alive.

"I'm thinking," said Benery, quietly taking a few paces to keep pace with the man in the net.

"This is no time to think. Oh, God! get the boat. I can feel the meshes dragging me down. Why don't you help me?"



*Solomon (who has had a terrific bang on the nose from his friend).—"DO IT AGAIN.
DO IT AGAIN. I CAN SEE DIAMONDS!!!"*

"I'm wondering if you are worth it, Alick."

"I've been a good friend to you, Benery. I've acted fair and square by you,—given you a full-third share and shown you all receipts."

"Curse you, let me think!" said the half-caste, impatiently.

"The boat! the boat!" yelled the man in the net.

"Holy Moses, man, won't you hold your cursed tongue?"

Then the eyes of the entangled man looked piteous entreaty, with something of the look of a sheep in the slaughter-yard.

The force of the current rushed between his legs; the net clung like the tentacles of an octopus; and now and again he felt the loose shifting sand with his feet, and every effort he made to save his life left him more hopelessly bound than ever.

"Do you mind the day the *Lizzie M.* went ashore, Alick?" asked Benery. "You remember what a storm it was.

"Looking out to sea from the Head the water was one mass of breakers, and the wind seemed to be trying to tear your beard out by the roots.

"You were aboard the *Lizzie M.*, and she was running into the bay for shelter. My heavens! I can see her now, her masts swaying as she came forward as if she would turn turtle. Her decks were one mass of water.

"She struck and everybody was drowned but you."

"Yes, yes!" said the man in the net. "You came out in a boat and rescued me. You saved me then, Benery; save me now!"

"They said I was mad, mate, and so maybe I was; but I ran out in an open boat and was just in time and brought you in insensible. What have you done to repay me for that, Alick?"

"What rot, man! If I hadn't taken Leila, she would have jumped at the first white man who offered to keep her. Would you let me die like this for a woman?"

"No, not for fifty women, Alick. But I was more hurt over that than I care to say. She was one of my own colour, and I loved her every bit as much as you would love a woman of your own colour.

"We will let that pass; though it was rather hard to be cut out of your girl by a man whose life you saved a few days before!

"But do you mind when you fell overboard out on the wide Grounds and the man-eaters were coming at you. Those two big sharks always followed up the boat to snap at our fish as we hauled them aboard.

"We used to say that if one fell overboard two sharks would have a meal, and you were as close to being eaten by sharks as you are to death now, only I did another mad trick. I saw your danger, and I plunged overboard, splashing to frighten the monsters away.

"They went off, and you were picked up just in time. And now, Alick, how did you repay that?"

The man in the net had been dragged lower, and now his mouth was so near the water he could not reply.

He raised himself slightly, however, and gasped—

"Save me!"

"When we were drunk the next day, you struck me a cowardly blow. I was never your match, anyhow, but you took me un-awares and struck what you called the 'king-blow,' and broke my jaw. A hatch was open; and I fell down the hole and fractured two ribs, and was laid up two months in the hospital."

"Save me!" whispered the man in the net.

"No, Alick, I won't save you; you are not worth it. I forgive the woman and the 'king-blow,' but I remember what you are going to do if I save you now, so I'll let you die like the dog that you are."

The mouth and nostrils of the man in the net were now below water; but a wild light of terror sprang into his eyes, and he forced himself up until head and shoulders rose above the corks, and he cursed Benery as only a dying man knows how to curse.

Benery fell back from the sea as if those fingers could clutch him and drag him in to share his doom.

Then Alick was taken down, down, till he was completely swallowed.

Half an hour passed, and Benery still watched the corks, now close to the rocks.

A half-caste girl came over the sand hummock to see her lover.

"Where's Alick?" she said.

"He is not here, Leila. There is his net. Maybe if we watch we will see him."

Leila looked at the floating net, and then at her old sweetheart, as if inquiring.

Then she looked at the net again.

As she looked, the head of a dead man rose from the net.

"Alick!" she cried in terror.

And in her fear she nestled into the arms of Benery.

And the dead face was drawn down and never seen again.





Brown.—"HULLY O! OLD MAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN TOWN?"

Little Snooks.—"OH, JUST LOOKING ROUND, DEAR BOY, JUST LOOKING ROUND!"

THE SPOOK OF THURSDAY ISLAND

BY

SPENSER SARLE

“**H**AVE any of you gentlemen ever been to Thursday Island?” said Mr. Hackett.

The schooner *Brudernali Parker* was lying in Suva Harbour, and the mate of that vessel was the guest of Halliwell and the rest of us at the Pacific Club.

We were glad to have him there, too, for his yarns made an agreeable break in the monotony of life in that Pacific Paradise which Westerners call Fiji and Polynesians know as Viti Levu.

It happened that some of us had been to Thursday Island, but we guessed that the mate had a yarn to spin and we told him to go ahead.

“Well,” he said, “I had a very queer experience once in connection with Thursday, and I’ll just tell you how it was.”

I was second mate of a trading schooner at the time—the *Waitiki*, Captain Silas P. Crinks, who had drifted down from the Pacific Slope and taken a hand on his own account in the copra and *beche-de-mer* business.

We put in at Thursday Island one Saturday, and concluded to stop over Sunday, as the skipper had an acquaintance there, a roustabout called Dan Kennedy. I’d never seen Dan myself, though he was a ‘Frisco man like me; but I’d heard a good deal about him one way

and another, and there wasn’t any of it that was good neither.

Well, when we got ashore, the first thing the skipper heard down at Vandersnoop’s grog-shop, which was the only kind of a club they had on the island in those days, was that this Dan Kennedy was in the same kind of trouble again.

This time, however, he hadn’t been quite handy enough with his weapon, and the Dutchman had downed him, neatly trussed him up like a thanksgiving turkey, and locked him in a shed at the back of his shanty where he kept his schnapps.

They were ready for any kind of fun up on Thursday Island, and we found out that Dan was to be tried on the Sunday, and hanged, all trussed as he was; which seemed to Vandersnoop and his friends a kind of pleasing novelty in the way of executions.

Of course it was no good the skipper saying anything at that stage of the proceedings, so he concluded to stop over Sunday and see fair play.

Sunday afternoon, three o’clock, sure enough the court was impanelled on the verandah of Vandersnoop’s grog-shop, with Vandersnoop himself on a rum barrel acting as judge.

The skipper suggested that some disinterested party should be elected to preside over the court, but the Dutchman put it to the crowd that he was the person that Dan had tried to rob, and that nobody had a better right to try the prisoner

than he had, and the crowd found the argument unanswerable.

They were a pretty lively lot by that time, for they had been preparing for the case since breakfast, and they were ripe for most any devilment that suggested itself. There was only one contingency that they weren't, so to speak, prepared for, and that was the one that came along.

When the court went to the shed to fetch the prisoner out, he wasn't there.

The door had not been forced, there was no window, the walls were made of four-inch teak, and there wasn't room enough in the shed to hide a cat; but Dan had disappeared.

Well, they raised Hades those boys did; and Vandersnoop shut up his store and we all started out on a hunt after Dan; but there wasn't a soul who'd seen him in all the island, so far as we could find out; and how he'd got away was a mystery.

When we got back there was another pleasant little surprise in store for the Dutchman and his friends, for the first thing we saw when Vandersnoop unlocked his shop door was a large and tasteful arrangement of broken glass in the middle of the room.

All the liquor bottles on the shelves and the counter had been taken down and neatly laid out on the floor, and then very carefully smashed.

It was a paralysing waste of good liquor, but the most prejudiced kind of person couldn't say but what it was artistically done.

Some of the judge's party raved a bit, but the Dutchman he only looked white and skeered.

There was a matter of a couple of hundred dollars' worth of liquor spoiled, but it wasn't that that troubled him so much as the way it

was done; and when you come to think of it, it was rather a skeery sort of an incident.

Here's a chap knocked down and knifed and hammered pretty much into a jelly by an angry Dutchman about seven times his size, trussed like a fowl and all his joints double-knotted, and sailors' knots at that, and locked up in a shed without a window and two padlocks on the door.

The first thing that happens is that he gets out of that wooden house and inside of a locked-up shop, arranges three or four dozen bottles in an elegant pattern on the floor and smashes the entire collection, and then disappears again; and not a soul on the island has seen the ghost of a sign of him.

Well, when the Dutchman put it that way to the boys, they most of them began to feel about as sick as he did; and they were mighty careful to get away to their own shanties before it was dark.

As for Vandersnoop, he wouldn't have slept in his shop that night for a sackful of dollars, and he got the skipper and me to help make all snug for the night,—batten down hatches, so to speak,—and put a padlock on the door, and we all went off to the schooner and turned in.

Next morning, soon after sun-up, we all three went ashore again, and took a survey of the grog-shop before going in, and found everything all trim as we'd left it.

That kinder gave the Dutchman confidence, and he unfastened the door and we stepped in.

Well, gentlemen, you never saw such a sight as the inside of that liquor store. You may take my word for it that there wasn't one individual article in that shanty that was breakable, tearable, bendable, splitable, or twistable that was not broken, torn, bent, split,

or twisted just according to the internal nature of it.

Vandersnoop's pyjamas and all the clothes from his big sea-chest that he kept for his holiday trips to Sourabaya, and every other article of clothing he owned, was torn into shreds and laid in patterns on the floor, or hung from nails on the walls, or draped in Fourth-of-July festoons over the counter.

The chairs and tables and all the portable woodwork and fittings were hacked to kindling-wood, and their remains piled in a pyramid on the floor. There was not a dram of liquor left in the shop, nor a vessel of any kind or shape that would hold it; and bar the counter, there wasn't a dime's worth of solid property in the place.

Vandersnoop let out a roar like that of a "bottlenose" when the harpoon fetches into him, and then made a rush across the ruins to the far corner of the shop, where he started tearing away at the planking of the floor till his hands were bleeding.

The skipper went to give him a hand, while I kept watch, and presently they raised a couple of planks, and the Dutchman hauled out the big iron box in which he hoarded up his profits. The box didn't look as if anybody had been fooling with it, but Vandersnoop, just to make sure, hunted through his pockets till he found a key, and then opened it.

Well, gentlemen, if you'll believe me, there wasn't a single thing in that iron box except a small spotted snake. And there had been, the Dutchman said, a matter of twenty thousand dollars there, no longer ago than Saturday night.

And that snake was one of the deadliest kind of worms that you'd find on the whole island, so that for the next ten minutes we

were all of us skipping round pretty lively. Then the skipper got in a good square hit at it with the leg of a chair, a hit that would have settled most snakes that I know anything about, and the pesky thing gave a hiss and disappeared.

I think myself it went down a knot-hole in the floor, but the Dutchman and the skipper, they would have it that it just vanished in a wreath of pale blue smoke. I was only second mate then, and I didn't want to spoil a good yarn, and it was no business of mine anyway, so I allowed it was so, blue smoke and all.

Well, this finished Vandersnoop. You couldn't persuade him anyhow that that snake wasn't the spirit of Dan Kennedy; and he was the worst broken-up kind of a man you ever heard of.

The skipper suggested a drink, being a practical kind of a man; and as there was nothing in the liquor line left in the shop, we moved out to the shed at the back where the cases of schnapps were stored. The Dutchman unlocked the door and took a step inside it; and then came out again in a hurry.

He was the most scared man I ever saw, and when he got outside he gasped out something that we couldn't catch the drift of, and fell down in a kind of a fit.

We looked in the shed, and by James! gentlemen, there was the prisoner, all tied up just as the Dutchman had left him on the Saturday night.

He was dead, too; there was no kind of doubt about that; and if we hadn't known that he'd only been trussed up like that a matter of thirty hours or so, we should have said he'd been dead a week or more.



BANK HOLIDAY.

"JUST LIKE 'ER. BEEN AN' COPIED MY 'AT!"

He was just about as dead as he could be.

Well, we called a couple of Tokalaus and buried him as quick as we could, and then we broached a case of schnapps and brought Vandersnoop to life again.

He was powerfully upset, Vandersnoop was, and pretty sorry too, I think, that he had been so rough with Dan; and he promised that if the skipper would draw up a suitable inscription he would order a tombstone over from Townsville to put over Dan's grave.

Well, our time was up, so we said good-bye to the Dutchman and got aboard the schooner, and by noon we were under way again. I was just going forward to get a bit of a snooze when the skipper laid a hand on me. He was looking rather white.

"Hackett," he said, "this thing is getting monotonous."

"What's the matter?" said I.

"Just look away aft," he said, "and tell me if you can see anything in the lee scuppers just forward of the mizzen shrouds."

"Why, yes," said I; "seems to me there's a long galoot of a chap there that I haven't seen before. Friend of yours, cap'n?"

He looked at me rather queerly and took a pace or two up and down. Then he looked up to the sky to see what kind of weather we were going to have, and took a green cigar out of his case and lit it slowly. Then he came up to me and gripped my shoulder again, and said—

"Don't you know what it is?"

"I dunno *who* it is," I said, "if that's what you mean."

"It ain't—I mean, do you know *what* it is?"

"No, I don't," I said.

"Well," said the skipper, "it's Dan Kennedy's ghost!"

It gave me a good deal of a turn at first; but just then the chap in the lee scuppers got up and stretched himself, and then came slowly forward towards where we stood.

He looked to me a sight too solid for any kind of a spook that I'd ever heard of, but I'm free to admit that there was a mouldy, grave-clothes' sort of look about him, and a leper-white kind of a face that was rather skeery in a way.

"By Jiminy!" I said, "you don't say?"

"It's so," said the skipper. And he was so solemn about it that I allowed it was so; and besides, I was only second mate at the time, and it was no business of mine even if it was Dan Kennedy's ghost.

The spook came up with a sickly kind of smile and mumbled something that I did not hear. Then the skipper spoke and gripped me a bit harder.

"Say, Dan Kennedy," he said, "this thing's got to stop right away."

"What thing, cap'n?" said the spook.

"Now, lookee here, Dan," the skipper went on to say. "I knowed you when you was alive a good many years, and I never knowed much good of you. You never had any principle about you then, and I'm blamed sure you've got none now or you'd stop quiet in your grave at the foot of Tomaki hill. I never done you no harm, and I'd a' seen you had fair play at the trial if so be as you'd lived to be tried. I buried you as comfortable as a corpse could wish, and I've drawed out a epitaph for you which anyone might be proud of, with no back talk about what you done in 'Frisco or what you tried to do at Vandersnoop's. Now you go back to your grave and stop there peaceful, or I'll—I'll—"

It seemed to kinder occur to the skipper then that no Sailing Regulations that he'd ever heard of provided any scheme for dealing with a

mutinous ghost aboard ship, and he stopped rather lamely.

I saw a sort of triumph in the spook's eye at that moment, and I remembered that when he was alive he'd been the all-firedest kind of a hand at a joke, and I reckoned that now he was dead and buried and had no responsibilities, so to speak, he couldn't get out of the habit of it.

"See here, cap'n," he said, or at least *it* said, "I've got no ill-will against you. You've done the square thing by me and given me an elegant funeral, though it wasn't attended quite as numerous as I'd have liked. But you done your best, and I'm much obliged to you. But you don't know what a demon of a chap that Dutchman is. If I'd a bin twice as dead as I was, I couldn't have rested in the same island as him; and all I want you to do is to just let me put a few miles of blue water between my bones and him, and then I'll rest quiet in Ponapè or Soma-Soma, or wherever you're going, and I won't trouble you any more."

The skipper seemed mollified somewhat by this explanation, but he didn't like having a ghost aboard the schooner all the same. He was afraid it might interfere with discipline and the working of the craft; for our crew, besides me and the first mate, who was sick, and two Lascar steersmen, were all Union Islanders, or Tokalaus as they call them, and they are a most unreasonably superstitious lot; and like as not, if they'd known there was a spook on board, they'd have jumped over the side there and then and took their chance among the woebegongs and gios, as they call the sharks in those parts.

The skipper thought the thing out in his slow ruminating kind of way, and then he said—

"Now, lookee here, Dan. I understand what you say, and though I don't hold with ghosts aboard a ship, I ain't onreasonable; and if you

feel as you can't rest in peace on the same land as that Dutchy, you bein' dead and him bein' alive (though powerful chastened, Dan, powerful chastened), I don't mind you stopping here for a spell so long as you don't make yourself a nuisance. If you'll give me your word—it wasn't worth much when you was alive, but maybe bein' dead makes a difference,—if you'll give me your word to behave as much like a live man as you know how, you can stop here till we strike land."

"Cap'n," said the spook, "that's real good of you. You've done the thing handsome by my cadaver, and now I'm a spook you're doin' the thing handsomer still, an' I'll never forget it; an' I tell you what I'll do, cap'n. I'll give you my word to do what you say, and I'll never let another ghost fool around you as long as you're alive. I can't say no fairer'n that, can I?"

Then he held out his hand; but the skipper drew the line at that point, and marched away aft. There's such a thing as being too familiar even with a spectre, and he was a great disciplinarian the skipper was. I was only second mate myself, and I took the hand and shook it; and a mighty substantial hand it was too, for a spook's.

Well, I just let on to the crew that Dan was a passenger we'd taken aboard at Thursday to have a cruise with us; and it passed off all right, and never a Tokalau suspicioned but what he was a live man.

About a little while after that, Dan came up to me and clapped me on the shoulder.

"By Jiminy!" he said, "if this ain't the cusseddest racket I was ever on."

"Why," said I, "aren't you dead then?"

"Not by a jugful, I ain't," said Dan.

"Well," I said, "that's what I thought all along. But how do you explain the way we came

to find you dead in the shed, and then buried you?"

"Why," said he, "it was just this way. You see, I owed a good-sized kind of a grudge or two to the Dutchman, on account of the heathen and unprincipled way in which he had skinned me at Poker, when I had the deck ready stacked to skin *him*; an' I'd bin waiting for a good deal of a while for a chance to get even with him, but I couldn't see no reasonable way to fix it till about the night before you chaps came ashore, when I found there was a sort of a double roof over the Dutchy's saloon.

"I prised a plank loose and crawled in; and there I was, as comfortable as a person could wish, with a first-rate balcony view, through the chinks in the boards, of everything that was going on in the saloon. I see that all the folks except one or two that was asleep in the corner had gone home, and the Dutchman he was snoozing behind the counter fuller'n a goat.

"Well, I was just figuring that it would be after midnight before Van was as ripe as I wanted him to be, when in slouches a low-down galoot of a chap who was the dead image of me, barring that he was about three shades darker, being a half-caste outsider from way over the other side of the island.

"It didn't take him more'n about a flash to size up the situation, and then he helped himself to a tumbler of rum. There wasn't a soul taking any stock of him, and he just gave a look round and then, softer'n a cat, he crept round to the other side of the counter and had just got his hand on the cash-drawer when the Dutchman woke up, and there was an uproar you might have heard over at Paki.

"Van he thought it was me, and the other chaps they were in that condition that they allowed it *was* me too; and when they'd got

through with him there wasn't any grog in Vandersnoop's store that would have woke him, and it's pretty hard stuff too, some of it. Then they tied him up in a bundle with a stick under his knees, and locked him up in the shed.

"Well, that ther' double roof went right over the shed too; and as soon as Van had shut up the saloon and gone to bed, I rose a plank or two and hiked the half-caste up on to the roof, calculating that maybe he'd come in useful, and not reckoning that the Dutchman had gone quite so far with him. When I found he was a goner, I marked up another score to Dutchy; and next morning when I heard what was going on, I knew I'd got him fixed; and when you all went hunting for my ghost, I just laid out a little surprise for you.

"I figured on skipping to the schooner that night, but when you took Vandersnoop along I had to hold off and roost in the roof again; but I didn't exactly fool away the time, as I reckon you'll allow. When I'd fixed things up for Van, I lowered the half-caste down into the shed again, and then slipped away and hid in the mangroves till you'd all come ashore again and gave me a chance to swim off to the schooner.

"I calculated to ask the cap'n a favour, but, by James! I didn't reckon on being a ghost and making him ask *me* one."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Hackett, as Halliwell took a long breath, "we toted Dan Kennedy's ghost along as far as Cooktown; and when we got to Townsville, the captain was as good as his word about the tombstone; and the next time any of you gentlemen go to Thursday, there you'll find it, epitaph and all, 'Erected to the memory of Dan Kennedy by a few admiring friends,' at the foot of Tomaki hill."



Paul H.A.

“TAKEN FROM LIFE”

By

W. P. GROSER

“I CAN’T believe it!” she cried, springing to her feet.

“Ah,” said the Secretary for War, “but I wish you could, Lady May.”

“You — wish — I — could?” she repeated, wondering.

The Secretary sat on the other side of the fireplace, leaning back in the attitude a thousand caricatures have made familiar: the long thin hands dangling loosely, the white expressionless face hanging forward, chin on chest.

His heavy half-dropped lids showed a rim of white below the pupil, so that he looked tired. “Chronic Fatigue” was the title in *Vanity Fair*.

“Yes,” he said; “for I should like you not to believe it for a better reason.”

His face gave no encouragement. Perhaps Lady May Tourmalin had decided long ago that there was no use expecting that.

But suddenly she was by his side, and bending, caught the hand on the armchair in both of hers. It was the affair of a tick of the clock: almost before she knew it she was in her chair again—exultant, terrified.

“Then you don’t think I am so hard as they say?”

“I don’t think you are cruel, Mr. Marvel. I don’t *think* you are cruel.”

“It’s a very doubtful point, isn’t it,” he answered. “Think again. Don’t forget the

‘slaughtered innocents’ and the ‘smoking holocaust’ and—”

“Ah, don’t do that,” she cried; “don’t talk as if you did not care. I know you better than that.”

Leaning forward, the fireglow caught her square grand face. The light was quite dim in the room, but Marvel saw her straight dark eyebrows, her crown of dark brown hair. The black lace dress made her skin dead-white.

“Yet you read what Staniland says?”

“I read what they all say. And because I know better—just a little better—I couldn’t bear what they said at dinner, jesting as if you were callous, as if you were a ruthless god. That is why I asked you up here—to tell you,” said the girl.

The Secretary for War got up from his armchair. He was taller even than she; he was slighter, harder too. The little clock pointed to half-past eight: the House sits at nine, so he wasted no time. That was his way too, as his attitude was his way—head back, lids dropped.

“And I came up here,” he said slowly, “because I wanted to tell you something—that I want you to be my wife.”

It is the fashion to assume—it is a conspiracy of fiction wherewith to corrupt the minds of the unintelligent—that a woman lives expecting these words. So it is that the heroine is ready

with the proper answer, and the limelight is turned on to time.

But Lady May did not speak at all; as he ended she sprang forward, but lay back again, motionless, silent, staring at the fire.

"I need not tell you, Lady*May," he said, "that you are very beautiful. You must know that. But I can tell you that you are the one good woman I have known, that you are the one woman of intelligence that I have known—and incidentally, that you are the one woman who has not thought ill of me."

A little smile—a sad contented little smile—came to her lips, and she looked up at him, for a moment raising her long lashes.

"If that is all—" she murmured.

He was at her side at the word and had caught her hand. He had found a new voice and a new manner. "But that's not all, May. For I love you—I love you."

"Can you love me—or anyone, Mr. Marvel?" And neither he nor she could tell if the words were more playful, or more serious.

"I love you, May," he said again. "If I am hard, I am hard to change. Come to me, May."

Still she did not answer. Slowly he dropped her hand, and slowly raised himself upright. His lids dropped over those new eyes once more.

"Then you don't care?" he said, in the old hard monotone, the even level voice.

Lady May looked at him. "Already?" she said. "What would it be if we were together—always?"

"Heaven on Earth," he said quickly, and his voice rang once more. "Heaven, May."

"Ah!" said Lady May. Her lips parted and her eyes gleamed. Then the light went out. "But—" she whispered.

There was a pause giving a fair chance. He

was not hasty now, any more than when he set his mind against mercy and drove on through his duties. But once again the emotion vanished, and there stood by her side the cold hard statesman, with the locked face and the veiled eyes.

"You do not care?" he said again. "I was mistaken?"

"I do not care?" she said, low and harsh. "Dear God, but how I care!"

Marvel bent down and took her hand: he raised it to his lips and kissed it. "You will be my wife, dear?"

She turned on him. "How can I tell?" she said; "how can I dare? I love you; yes, I love you—take that and remember it against me. But I am afraid; yes, Wiston, I am afraid. See only now how cruel you were, and I am only a woman against you."

He said gravely, "You can trust me?"

"Trust you? Yes, trust you to do your duty: trust you to turn to neither side and to give me justice. Justice—!" She stretched out her hands to him. "Wiston, perhaps I should want more than justice. I think many women—don't you?—would want more than justice. Perhaps I am not as good as you think, and I am afraid—yes, afraid. Could you forgive, Wiston? Yet—I love you. Dear God," she cried again, "how I love you!" and she caught his hand.

The little room was lighted only by two shaded candles; Wiston Marvel was standing quite still, May sitting quite still, when a servant knocked and came in hurriedly.

"Miss Heritage would like to speak to you, my lady," he said.

"Miss Heritage?" repeated Lady May. "Where is she, Vaughan?"

"In the library, my lady."

"The library?"

“Yes, my lady. The lady seemed in—in some distress, so I showed her in there. She said she would not detain you, if you would see her for a moment at once.”

“I will come down,” said Lady May. The man left the room.

“Will you wait a moment while I see what is the matter?” she said to Marvel. He opened the door in silence, and Lady May went out.

It was but a few minutes before she came back—quickly, with a strange look.

“It is you she wants to see,” Lady May said, standing near the door and looking at the man.

“Really?” he said. “What does she want, do you know?”

“It is Miss Heritage: her brother is Captain Heritage that they were talking about at dinner. She says she has been trying to see you all day at the War Office and the House, and couldn’t get to you. Will you see her now?”

“Really, Lady May,” he said, “you ought not to be troubled with my business matters. It would be no use my seeing her. If you don’t mind, may she be told—?”

“Will you see her now—to please me?” said Lady May, looking steadily at him, one hand on the door.

“You know what it will be?” he said. “She will want a scene, and I am a poor subject for the tragic emotions.”

“Yes, I know,” she said.

Indeed everybody knew. For Captain Heritage had been captured by the commando that had tried to rescue their officer, Leydesdal.

To the semi-civilised mind war is a game whose rules are subject to exceptions. And when the court-martial had sentenced Leydesdal for nine black murders—black, plain and cold,—his second in command explained that Captain Heritage would die on the day that Leydesdal was hanged.

And it was not certain that he would die as easily. The execution was fixed for the 19th, and it was on the 17th that Miss Heritage called.

“I know,” said Lady May. “Will you see her, if you please, Mr. Marvel?”

“Yes,” said the Secretary for War.

When Miss Heritage had come in, Lady May shut the door and took her to Mr. Marvel.

“Miss Heritage,” she said, “this is Mr. Marvel, whom you wish to see,” and then she stood against the back of her chair, her face in shadow, watching.

Miss Heritage was a tall girl of nineteen. She had brown hair and blue eyes—a type, unfortunately, which does not bear emotion. She was probably beautiful—beautiful in weakness as the older girl in strength: at an ordinary time she appeared extraordinarily fragile, now she looked impossibly breakable.

For she had been crying—crying bitterly. Her breast heaved with unconcealed distress; her soft hands clutched nervously at each other, at the lace of her dress, at the air. Her brown hair strayed unnoticed under her black hat.

She came towards Marvel, looking wildly at him.

“Sit down, Miss Heritage, if you please,” he said.

He had risen when she came in and stood until she was seated. Never for a moment did his face change; his voice was as cold, as calm, as cutting as at other times. Those who know him only by his demeanour in the House of Commons know more than they think.

When the country that trusted him called him cruel, when the colleagues he directed called him inhuman, they saw him as the girl saw him now.

“And now,” he said, “what do you want with me?”



SAUCE HOLLANDAIZE.

To my Friend, WIDHORFF.

(PHIL MAY.)



“BROTHER BRUSHES.”

She flung herself forward. "He is my brother," she began, and sobbed bitterly, her face buried in her hands. "He's my brother. I am Alice Heritage. Can't you save him?"

Mr. Marvel got up. "Miss Heritage," he said, "you could have saved yourself this painful interview if you had read your paper this morning. I said in the House yesterday that I could take no steps in the matter."

"I saw it," she cried. "But—"

"Though the reports were only in the papers to-day, I have, of course, had full details for some time. I can add nothing to that answer."

"Then can't you rescue him?"

"There is no chance," he said, "of rescue."

There was finality in his tone, and he was still standing. She spoke quietly. "And you won't even hear me?" she said.

He looked for a moment at Lady May. "On the contrary," said he, sitting down again, "I will hear anything you may wish to say to me."

It is the jest of the gods that the only time we cannot take our opportunities is when they come. To Miss Heritage driving in her cab along the Mall the scene had stood out clear—the cold tall man, dark, handsome, strong, melted by the passionate pleading of the beautiful young girl.

"There is something more than a policy," he had said to her in the cab; "that is a woman's tears. Take his life. You have earned it."

She had bent her head. He had raised her, written a dispatch. "Take that," he had said, and then as she went, bowed over her hand and kissed it. "Ah, Miss Heritage"—and he had struck a pathetic yet noble attitude,—"I wish I had as good a friend as you are to your brother."

Now for the reality. A dim-lit room, a man without a heart, patient, reasonable, silent, and

quite resolved. A girl incoherent and wordless, moaning and rocking to and fro.

He sat quite still and waited a reasonable time. "I cannot say anything more, Miss Heritage, and I must go."

"Ah," she cried, "for pity's sake, for pity's sake. He is everything to me—to die like this, when peace is coming, tortured to death. What does this man Leydesdal matter? Isn't the Government strong enough to spare his life? Need you revenge yourself on this poor creature? Isn't my brother worth more than that?"

"It is impossible, Miss Heritage," Mr. Marvel said, "to remit the sentence. We have said that the law must take its course, and our policy cannot be lightly changed." He said nothing about a woman's tears; most of the items in that programme were left out.

"We?" she flashed out. "It is you—you—you."

"Very well," he said; "it is I."

"Ah," she cried, springing up; "it is you who have made this War—you who are starving the people—you who have spilt the blood of our brave men—who will torture my brother to death—who have broken my heart."

There was another pause.

"I have promised to hear you, but need this interview be further prolonged?"

"Then it is true?" she said; "you do care nothing, you will do nothing? And what does all this humanity we hear so much about mean?"

The Secretary of State for War looked up for almost the first time. He looked straight at the girl.

"I am afraid, Miss Heritage," he answered, quite slowly, "from what you tell me, that it all means—nothing."

Some slight inflection caught the girl's

attention and she looked narrowly at him. To that type of mind—the type that contemplates its emotions from a little distance—the finest passion does not exclude a shrewd interest even at times like these.

But by then he had dropped his eyes again, and his grey-white face gained yet another likeness to a dead man’s, in that it told no tales.

As it could hardly have been from observation, it is another argument for the feminine intuition that Miss Heritage suddenly changed her manner. She became very quiet, very grave.

“Mr. Marvel,” she said, “you are quite alone in the world?”

“I really do not see,” he said, in his cutting tones, “what this has to do with the matter. And my time is limited.”

“You promised you would hear me.”

“Well?”

“What I mean is, you are not married and have no friends?” It was the recognised conception of the Secretary. But the girl’s face, as she spoke, grew red, though her eyes were steadfast.

He answered perhaps a thought more hurriedly than usual. “Well,” he said, “and what then?”

“And do you think me beautiful?” she went on.

He did not look up. “Yes,” he said.

There was a pause; Lady May’s hand on her chair-back caught the light; it was clenched and she stood motionless, staring. But the girl’s eyes did not drop as she spoke.

“I would not refuse you anything you asked,” she said, deliberately, in a low voice.

A dead silence lasted for a moment. It was more than long enough.

Mr. Marvel rose to his feet: the girl did the

same. “That is all you have to say?” he inquired.

She bowed her head.

“I am afraid, Miss Heritage, that I have nothing to say in the matter. I cannot take any steps to postpone or countermand the execution of Leydesdal. The law must take its course.”

She faced him and met his eyes. “Oh,” she cried; “oh!” and with her arm raised as if to ward off a blow, she turned and went to the door, walking slowly, heavily, with dragging steps.

Marvel walked across the room and held the door. He bowed as she passed, but she seemed not to notice, her lips shaping words, and her eyes vacant.

Marvel followed her out, and in the passage found a servant. “Take this lady to her carriage,” he said. “Good-bye, Miss Heritage.” But she did not speak, and followed the man.

When the Secretary came back into the room, May was standing just as he had left her. He went straight to her, and took her passive hand.

“May,” he said, “I have to go. Will you give me my answer?”

She raised her eyes: there was no passion in them now, but a great sadness, and a mist of tears.

“Can you let her go like that?”

He still spoke kindly. “It was no good to give her any hope,” he said.

“But you might have spoken kindly—have comforted her—you might have, you might have. And now—now I know you. So good-bye. That is my answer.”

“I see,” said Marvel; “you want some purple. Now I,” he went on, bitterly, “prefer to keep gallery play for a crowd.”

He left her: ran from the room and down the stairs. Miss Heritage was getting into her

cab. "One moment, Miss Heritage — may I trouble you a moment longer."

The girl's face lighted up — her manner changed. She was back at once, followed him to the room and stood at the table — hope, inquiry, suspense, all in her face.

"I can give you no hope," he began; but before he could finish the sentence the girl broke down, and stood there sobbing hopelessly, helplessly. Marvel went up to her and took her right hand in his.

"My dear young lady," he said, "do not cry any more. Though I envy you your sorrow."

She looked quickly up at him.

"What better do you want for your brother, Miss Heritage? Would you have him play at home, and be a soldier? Would you have him live at his country's price?"

Her hands dropped to her sides, her eyes opened wider, and her breath came more quickly.

"What would he want, Miss Heritage? That his country's cause should be weakened to save him? He has to die, and does it matter here or there, then or now? If his death does what his life was trying to do, if his fall comes where his duty lies — does anything else matter?"

Her eyes were bright enough now, her hands clasped and her lips parted. And the low tense voice went on. Could one resist what five thousand cheered?

"My dear young lady," he said, though thirty-eight is not so very old, "it is what your brother wishes that he has. His Majesty's battles will be fought better because he has died. And you must not forget him, but you must wear a brave face and not grieve too much. There is your chance too."

He took her hand again, and held it. "It is sisters like you that England wants for her sons. It is wives like you, Miss Heritage, mothers like you, training up sons to put king above life

and country above love. So you and your brother have each your place, and a proud destiny. Good-bye."

She had tears of a different quality now. It was not in her programme, but she caught Marvel's hand and kissed it. She walked very erect out of the door, with a firm step and a proud head held high. And the Secretary turned to Lady May once more.

"Was the purple purple enough?" he asked.

Lady May Tourmalin did not answer. She stood against her chair, her head was bent and her eyes were full of tears. He went up to her once more: the little clock struck nine.

"May," he said, "will you be my wife?" She drew away her hand and very slowly raised her head. "Or am I too — inhuman?" he went on, smiling.

But the girl did not smile; she looked, not at him, but past him, and very sadly.

"Yes," was her answer, "you are too inhuman."

Still he did not understand. "But still you love me, so you will forgive that, and remember that I did — paint that purple?"

"What I can ask for another I could not ask for myself," the girl said. "So, though I thank you for an honour I shall never forget, I will — not marry you."

"May!" His voice took a most odd tone; one might almost have thought he meant it. "May, I love you, and I will be kind to you — won't you change that answer? Don't you love me?"

She faced him, and did not draw away her hand. "Yes, Wiston, I love you. But you are too cruel. So — I have nothing to add to that answer."

For a moment he stood holding her hand, the muscles of his cheeks twitched a little, and his eyes looked brighter. Then his face assumed

even an excess of that blankness that answered to it for expression.

He bowed, dropped her hand, and said, “Good-bye.” “Good-bye,” she answered, mechanically, and he went away.

The Secretary for War entered the House of Commons from behind the Chair at twenty minutes past nine. As is usual at that hour the attendance was small.

A member of the Opposition rose from the Front Bench and asked him “whether the statements in the evening papers as to the favourable prospects for peace were accurate? and if so, whether the right honourable gentleman had any further communication to make to the House on the subject of the execution

of Leydesdal in view of the position of Captain Heritage?”

Wiston Marvel rose to his feet and made his reply. The monotone was perhaps a little emphasised, perhaps strangers would have found it even unusually difficult to believe the speaker’s age to be thirty-eight years and no more.

He said, “The information to which the right honourable gentleman refers is substantially accurate; it was in my possession when I answered his question yesterday. I have nothing to add to that answer.”

He sat down, and began to read a memorandum on baggage-mules passed to him by the under-secretary.

It was half-past nine o’clock.





She.—"DEAR ME; I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE WE PLAYED IN 'ROMEO AND JULIET.'
YOU *ARE* LOOKING WELL!"

He.—"THINK SO?"

DICK FRATTON OF TANGIER

BY

GEORGE WHITELEY WARD

THE following story is not, properly speaking, mine to tell at all. It belongs to Dick Fratton.

But Fratton is far away in Farther India now: with all his days, and a fair half of his nights beside, quite fully occupied in seeing that the lazy, gentle-mannered tribes who inhabit north of Bhamo do not amuse themselves by shifting the black-and-white striped boundary pillars set to mark off the limitations of the British Empire in that direction.

So that I really don't think that Fratton, who is a good fellow enough, and quite a reformed character to-day, will object to my relating the tale, if he come to hear of it.

I have said that Dick Fratton is a reformed character at this date.

So he is. But in those days he was reckoned—and not without some reason—about as hard a case as you would find in a long day's walking.

Not to speak of minor peccadilloes, he had taken a hand, and a leading hand, in some half dozen escapades—"ventures" Fratton would have probably preferred to call them—any one of which, could it have been brought squarely home to his door, would most assuredly have spared him all further concern about such sordid details as his board and lodging for many a day to come.

Yet somehow Fratton always succeeded in

hovering just upon the windward side of his country's Penal Code until that matter occurred of the Brinkley trusteeship, when he found it advisable to place, and without any kind of delay, the remainder of the continent of Europe, and some miles of blue water after that, between himself and a certain lawyer's office in the Temple, which was humming like an agitated hive of bees.

What old Brinkley was thinking of when he appointed a man of Fratton's "mingled" antecedents one of his executors passes understanding.

Possibly young Guy Brinkley's own suggestion may have had something to do with it.

A born driver of men, Fratton was particularly skilled in the handling of that inexperienced and wayward beastie, the human colt; and in this case the colt regarded his trainer with all the admiration due a Hero plus the reverence one vouchsafes to a Mentor and a Guide.

Then old Brinkley died, and the heir and his *fidus Achates* together set themselves to make things hum.

The next one heard was that young Guy Brinkley had been found dead in bed in a house in Pimlico, cuddling a half-emptied brandy bottle to his bosom.

On the nearest of kin pointedly suggesting that Fratton should render some account of his

past stewardship, that gentleman quietly went home, packed a couple of portmanteaux, took his place in the Cardiff mail, and was halfway across the Bay in a bucking, blunt-nosed tramp steamer before the inquiries for him had commenced in real earnest.

Everybody who has knocked about the world for a season, whether upon business or for pleasure merely, knows Tangier, that white sea-city of North Morocco, whose situation is of Paradise, but whose reek is altogether of the Other Place.

And knowing it, the traveller has, not improbably, agreeable memories of acquaintance made amongst the lonesome little colony of English folk who sit all day among the fragrant orange groves, and pine and sigh for the close dark streets of Home.

Set, though they be, in the very midst of the Elysian Fields, those charming villas that make white splashes on the brown landscape to south and eastward of the old Moroccan port, are for the most part but the drear sepulchres of many and many a fair career.

For the fact is that, owing to the lack of any extradition treaty between the Shereefian government and those of the neighbouring realms, this town of Tangier has come to be, by process of natural selection, a sort of oriental Minorities.

At Tangier, then, Dick Fratton arrived one blazing morning in July of 189--; and here, after a parting drink with the skipper and the "chief" of the old *Tankard*, he stepped delicately ashore, holding his nose as he passed through the dingy horse-shoe of the watergate and caught the scent of four thousand years of dirt and uncollected sewage.

Always a companionable man—from early years he had sedulously cultivated the useful art

of making his society acceptable alike to male and womankind—Fratton speedily made friends with the Anglo-Tangerenes.

Very shortly, no picnic to the orange gardens, or exploring party to the caves at Spartel, or excursion to El Fondak on the road to Tetuan, was complete without his presence; and more than one fair Amazon began to take a greater interest in the handsome face, with the keen grey eyes and square, determined chin, than she would have admitted even to her own looking-glass.

Meanwhile, when the first novelty of the *dolce far niente* life they lead down there had worn away, Fratton, used as he was to an active life, found the time hang somewhat heavily upon his hands.

It would have hung more heavily still had he not been instrumental, one night some few months after his arrival in the place, to rescue an elderly inhabitant from the onslaught of a band of prowling night-hawks who had set upon him, in one of the narrow lanes leading townwards from the gardens that ring in the place to eastward.

The old Moor was immensely grateful: called him, in Spanish, which Fratton knew, the "giver back to him of his life," and wound up by inviting him to accompany him to his house, situated within a stone's throw of the Great Mosque.

And so it came about that on most evenings (for his host's sake he would not go too often in the daylight) Fratton was to be found seated cross-legged on the cushioned divan in the dim-lit guest-chamber.

Gradually he dropped out of the habit of doing escort duty to frisky damsels in wild scurries across the ranges in the dawning, and was seen more and more seldom at the pig-sticking expeditions into the brown hills, and

sand-grouse shoots in the scorched *wady*s, with which their menfolk beguiled the weariness from life.

The old seyyid had by this time come to regard Dick almost as a son, while it looked very much as though the latter were going to settle down in permanence to the Moorish style of life.

Already he had discarded the European for the Berber dress—haik, jellab, and yellow leather slippers (the kind with turned-in heels)—and had for some while given up calling at the agent's for Home letters.

Which thing is the first sign that a European has gone "fantee" through all the East.

He had accompanied the seyyid upon more than one extended journey into the interior, and was a welcome visitor in many a Shellûh tent pitched amid the palmetto scrub on the burnt-up desert, where the sheikhly owner entertained the "guests of Allah" to the eternal dish of *couscoussou* and *samh*, the womenfolk listening timidly to the travel-talk from their place in the far corner by the saddle frames.

Then, to disturb the serenity of life, came the first faint note of what was destined, ere it was suppressed, to be a rather serious uprising of the north-coast tribes against the authority of the Sultan, at the best of times their ruler in not much more than name.

The old seyyid was ailing when the earliest tidings of the impending outbreak were brought into the city, and he died on the very day that the first gun-crack echoed dully across Tangier Bay.

Fratton personally superintended the funeral rites: reversed the cushions of the divan, and had the necessary prayers recited for the dead.

The old fellow had neither kith nor kin, and Fratton found himself left sole executor and legatee of all his property in "Gib" and Tangier, in addition to a very considerable sum in cash.

The moullahs who served in the Big Mosque did not like it, but there was the testament with the *vakeel's* official seal upon it.

Fratton could have gone Home now without having anything to fear from the lawyer people whatsoever. Instead, he sold the house, paid and collected certain outstanding accounts and—started for the hills to join the tribesmen.

Now, this story is not intended in any sense as a record of that little revolt.

Indeed, excepting and beyond the fact that his friends the hillmen had certain longstanding grievances, mainly concerned with the payment of tribute money, against the powers that were in the large towns, Fratton himself never knew with certainty what the trouble was all about.

He simply joined the side on which he had most friends, and, celebrated as he was for his straight shooting both at short and long ranges, the Shellûh chieflet to whom he more especially attached himself was extremely glad to have his company.

So, too, was pretty Zeinab of the gazelle eyes, as she sat above her weaving frame in the back part of the tent.

It chanced that Fratton had more than once encountered Zeinab on the hillsides, and, without being exactly in love with her, considered her a deucedly good-looking girl.

Moreover, she was a sheikh's daughter, with very many asses to her father's name, a fact of which more than one tarboosh-topped swain was perfectly aware.

As for Zeinab's own feeling in the matter, she having once cast her brown eyes on Fratton's tall, straight figure and handsome sunburnt face, never so much as glanced at any of her old admirers again.

The which bred trouble for her later, as will be seen.



Phil May

"AWFULLY FUNNY!"

All day long for weeks together during that summer the musketry fire rattled and echoed in the hills around Tangier; and the ragged Shereefian soldiery came to know quite well the sharp bark of Dick's revolver, and, hearing it, usually sought another way around.

They knew that each of those whiplike cracks meant a man the less to their side.

Fratton himself was never hurt. Moorish guns, especially of the German smuggled kind, are none too accurate in the first instance, whilst your Moroccan Tommy Atkins somehow never could understand the use of the "back-sight."

He lent his aid (and cartridges) in innumerable petty skirmishes, and, in addition to gathering a very respectable number of scalps to his own belt, was on two occasions directly instrumental in preventing Zeinab from being carried captive, with all her father's house, to the Kasbah prison in Tangier.

It was about now when he began to scent real danger in the air, and from his own side of the hedge, too. Henceforward he kept a very weatherly eye lifting for the traitor.

Alas! the best laid schemes have often ganged aghley since Robbie's day; and so it was in this case. The tribal encampment had been pitched upon a brow that overlooked the narrow Straits.

Fratton had spent that evening, as he spent most of them now, partly in frank love-making with pretty Zeinab, partly in dicking with the old sheikh over the question of dowry to be paid in the event of his becoming a member of the family.

He had taken his usual look round before turning in. The huddle of black tents, sharply outlined against the deep blue velvet dome, lay still under the blinking stars. Nothing stirred; only the oleanders whispered their

rustling responses to the sighing of the scented night wind, and the wee green ground-crickets shrilled in the low palmetto scrub.

From afar off came the drowsy murmur of surf beating on a pebbly beach. The whole picture breathed of security and peace. Dick lay down just within the doorway of the tent—

It seemed that he had but closed his eyes when he started up at the sound of shots hard by, accompanied by a very skerry of women's shrieks.

He got up on to his elbow, only to find himself looking straight into the muzzle of his own revolver held by a brawny Moor, whom he recognised in the flaring lantern-light as belonging to a neighbouring clan or *beit*, and, what was much more ominous, as one of Zeinab's most recently rejected suitors.

The man's teeth bared in a nasty smile as he spoke.

"And so the Frank thought to marry a sheikh's daughter, and to become a chief of the Angera. Allah forbid that ever a True Believer should yield duty to a Kafir dog! Now shalt thou know a dog's death, *kelb ün kelb*—dog and a dog's son."

The fellow turned to a number of rapsallions behind him and gave a brisk order.

In a twinkling Fratton was "thrown," blind-folded, and his hands bound tightly at his back.

Next, he was heaved unceremoniously across a mule's backsaddle and led off into the darkness.

Over the crackling underbrush his captors strode, their rapid pace showing their thorough acquaintance with the lay of the land.

At the end of an hour's extremely uncomfortable travelling—so far as Fratton was concerned—they entered a dip between two hills, and by the rumble-and-swish ahead he guessed they were nearing the seashore.

Here the procession halted, and Dick was lugged off his mount and hustled into a small chamber hollowed apparently out of the hill-face.

His hands were now untied and his eye-bandage removed, which he took to be a sign that his captors were pretty confident of their ability to hold him.

Then the heavy wooden door was slammed, and he was alone in the black dark.

It was full day when the headman of the band made his next appearance, and a glare of sunlight followed him through the doorway.

The interview which followed was brief, and to the point.

"Well, dog, wilt relinquish the girl if I let thee go?"

Fratton looked his man carefully over before replying. No, the odds of battle were too desperate.

The fellow was a walking arm-rack in the way of weapons, and amongst them Fratton recognised his own six-shooter conspicuously thrust into the crimson waist-sash.

But for the matter of that, even if he were able by a lucky blow to put the other *hors de combat*, he knew that any one of the crowd of frowsy bandits hanging about outside would esteem it a particular favour to be permitted to plunge a dagger-blade beneath his ribs.

Here was clearly a time for temporising, and Fratton temporised accordingly.

"And what guarantee have I that thou wilt release me then?"

"The passed word of Hamid bin Sa'ood, who scorns to lie even to a Kafir."

"And if I decline to resign to thee the girl, herself unwilling?"

The reply came sweetly.

"In that event, thine eyes and tongue having first been torn out, a ramrod will be passed

through either of thy shin bones, and thou wilt be strung head downward out over the cliff yonder for the sea-fowl to feed full gorge upon their fellow-carrion."

The insulting tones stung Fratton even more than did the threat.

He took a stride toward his jailor. Instantly the revolver, cocked and levelled, was pointing at his breastbone.

"And how long dost thou give me to consider these thy terms?"

"At dawn on the second day I come again. Perhaps the air of thy prison may by that time have taught thee reason. Be ready with thine answer, or—" it was a sufficiently significant gesture that Hamid made as he passed out.

Alone once more in that chill and clammy blackness Fratton's thoughts turned naturally to poor Zeinab. What had those ruffians done with her?

He had heard women's screams, as well as gun-shots, proceeding from the direction of her father's tent at the moment of his capture, and he feared that matters had gone hardly with his friend the old sheikh.

That the girl herself was safe so far he guessed, though how long she would remain so in the hands of such a man as Hamid it was easy to conjecture; and his blood boiled within him as he thought on his sweetheart's situation.

For the girl had grown dearer to him in those late weeks than, a short year ago, he would have believed it possible that any woman could become.

The time dragged wearily and slowly on. Once there was a rattle of keys, and the door creaked upon its rusty hinges to admit an ancient beldame, who after glancing, as Fratton thought, somewhat sympathetically towards him, had deposited a small plate of tough goat-meat

on the ground before him and retired, without opening her lips.

Left to his own devices Fratton speedily decided, after eating the coarse food, that the best thing to do under the circumstances was to go to sleep. He would require all his strength as well as all his wits, if he desired to remain alive on the third day.

He had of course no idea of the passage of time in that dog-hole. But by the "feel" he judged that it was deep in the night when the stillness was broken by a sharp whisper.

"Effendi!"

Though a trifle startled—this living in pitch darkness was getting somewhat on his nerves—Fratton had the sense to reply with equal caution.

There was a shuffling sound, and then, thrusting out his hand, he touched a creased and wrinkled visage. Its owner's next words cheered him greatly.

"I have come to free thee, Effendi, and for the sake of the maid Zeinab whose foster-mother am I. She lies mourning for thee in the huts yonder, where the women set to watch her sleep the deep sleep of *hasheesh*. Know," continued the old lady, "that a passage from this chamber, the knowledge of which remains to me alone of all the living, leads to a large cavern that opens on the shore below.

"By that road, Allah being merciful, shalt thou gain to freedom."

His sweetheart was still true to him, then. That was good hearing at the least.

"And what of the sheikh her father?" he asked.

In low, vibrating tones came the reply—

"The sheikh Abdullah lies dead in the grass four miles out in the desert, with Hamid's dagger-wound above his breast: and may the

wrath of Allah the Avenger burn up the black heart that struck the blow!"

So, then, there *had* been treachery, as he had surmised. And Dick inwardly resolved that, if chance favoured, the double debt he owed to the assassin should be repaid with interest.

The low-pitched voice went on directly—

"I leave thee now, for there is yet much to be done. To-morrow night I shall return. Meantime, let thy heart be glad. Thy Zeinab loves thee alway."

Fratton heard his visitor shuffle away, and a draught of dank damp air struck full upon his face ere the silence settled down once more.

Once during the succeeding day the same old crone brought him food, speaking, however, never a word. Dick guessed who she was, but forbore to ask questions. Which thing was wise, for caverns, even more than walls, have many open ears.

He amused himself during the long hours in fingering his way around the walls. He could discover no opening whatever anywhere. Yet opening there must be, or how had his mysterious visitant come in? Not by the outward door at any rate, for he knew that this was closely guarded.

He was very wide awake indeed when, after what seemed like a hundred years, the voice and the mysterious shuffle again broke the dead stillness.

"Art ready, Effendi? Then follow swiftly, but speak not; thy guards are close without."

Fratton needed no second bidding. He stumbled after, guided once more by the strong draught. The cave floor dipped slightly at its inward end, where now also he came upon an aperture which certainly had not been there that morning.

"Hasten!" said the Voice, this time at his

PAUL MAY



MOSAIC
ORNAMENTS

LONDON TYPES: WHITECHAPEL.

elbow. And Fratton, hastening, dislodged a boulder which turned over with a crash that might have waked the Seven Sleepers.

"Akhs! thy clumsiness. I cannot now close the way behind us," hissed the Voice in his very ear. Simultaneously a dull sound of shouting was heard outside the cave.

"They have discovered that Zeinab has escaped. Next they come to look for thee. Oh, quick!"

Then Dick's hand was grasped and he was half led, half dragged forward by his guide, who seemed to know her way by instinct in the dark. Directly, they came to smoother foot-hold, and now another voice, whose sound made Dick Fratton's heart leap into his throat, answered to the old hag's piercing whisper, "Art there, girl?"

The next instant Zeinab's soft arms were round Dick's neck and her lips against his own. Their greeting was, however, short. Again the old woman's mutter rose, sounding cavernously.

"Eyeh! is this a time for sillykisses? Hasten, I tell ye. Even now they seek thee in thy prison."

In single file, but with hand fast joined to hand, the two followed their guide down the cavern's endless windings.

At times the old lady stepped quickly and confidently over the rough rock floor, and Dick knew by his sixth sense that the roof was high above them; in other places the passage was so low and narrow that they needed to stoop to avoid colliding with the rock above.

More than once as they went Zeinab stumbled and would have fallen had not Dick's ready arm been round her instantly.

It seemed to him that they had been groping their way forward for long hours when a dim grey-green light showed on in front.

Again a noise of shouting sounded far behind them.

"They have found the passage. Hasten ye or we are lost." Quickening her pace, the old woman literally dragged them towards the light.

At length they reached the cave mouth. In front of them the dawn was breaking over a calm sea, and forty feet or more below, at the foot of the cliff, a boat, manned by a single rower, rocked gently on the water near the beach.

Yet that forty-foot drop—it seemed to Dick, as he craned over, that they were not so very much nearer freedom than they had been.

But now the old woman stepped behind a rock and speedily produced a coil of stout rope, one end of which Fratton lost no time in making fast.

The next matter was to get Zeinab down to *terra firma*.

The poor girl had borne up wonderfully well and pluckily so far. But as she stood now, with her teeth chattering from cold and fear together, it was plainly beyond her power to make so hazardous a trip alone.

Moreover, no time was to be lost.

The howls behind them were drawing nearer. Indeed, had but their pursuers had the advantage of the old woman's familiarity with the cavern's windings, they had already been recaptured.

"Carry her down, Effendi. I will follow."

At another moment Fratton's innate politeness would have impelled him to retort with "ladies first." Now, there was no time in which to argue so nice a point. Rapidly unwinding his *cummerbund*, he retied it round the girl and round himself.

Then, with an inward invocation to Allah and all the other gods, he swung out over the cliff at the same moment that a gun-shot from within the cave woke the echoes into a babel of eddying cries, and groans, and rumbles.

The waiting boatman caught Zeinab deftly

as she landed, and proceeded to carry her in his arms to the little barkey dancing yonder on the wavelets.

Dick looked anxiously up to see if the old woman was following. His heart stood still as he heard the noise of scuffling above.

Then a pistol-shot rang out, and immediately afterwards the old dame threw herself on the rope and came down, hand over hand, with all the agility and about half the grace of an elderly baboon.

"Inshallah! Effendi, we have beaten them," she panted, as she waded out towards the boat.

Fratton was on the point of following when the rope was once more seized from above and he saw Hamid, the author of all his troubles, preparing to descend.

The fellow carried Dick's revolver in one hand and eased himself down gently with the other.

Dick gave one look at the boat and then he decided to wait for his man. It was really the best thing he could do.

He knew the range of his own weapon to a nicety, but he opined that he still had a fair chance if it came to hand-grips.

Only now it was that Allah and all the other gods decided to throw the weight of their influence into the scale with our persecuted hero. That rope was not a new one, and the double burden that it had lately sustained had strained it in every strand. Hamid and his battery of weapons proved too much for its endurance.

He had not dropped five feet when it parted with a cr-r-ack! just above his hand. There was a yell, and directly afterwards a horrid thrump-p! on the rock-strewn shingle and—Hamid bin Sa'ood lay writhing with his backbone broken in halves.

Fratton's first care was to repossess himself of his "gun."

Then seeing no more heads at the cave mouth, he went up to his enemy and bent over him.

The man was paralysed from his middle and dying fast.

But he found strength to motion Dick to come closer.

"Kafir," he whispered hoarsely, and a deadly hate looked out of his glazing eyes. "Allah has permitted thee to triumph over a True Believer. But—" his voice grew feebler, and Dick, from whose face all trace of animosity had vanished, leaned still lower to listen to the blessing that he knew was coming.

"—But," snarled the dying man, "ere I cross the Bridge of Al Sirat I am minded to lay an ear-mark on thee by which the Shaitan may know his own whenever thy time cometh."

By a herculean effort Hamid raised his head, and before Fratton saw his move his teeth had met in a death-bite on the upper portion of the latter's ear.

When Dick freed himself a good half inch of flesh remained sticking betwixt the dead man's gums.

Dick was bleeding like a stuck pig as he got into the boat. He was not the only wounded member of the party either.

The game old woman was busily occupied in binding up a nasty cut on her brown forearm, while the boatman was dashing salt water by the balerful over Zeinab's face to bring her to.

The sight of her lover's danger a minute or two ago had been too much for her, and she had quietly fainted.

Three hours later the party were picked up by a steamer on its way to "Gib." It was as well, too, for the strong tide-race was rapidly carrying them Atlantic-wards.



“DO YOU REQUIRE A ‘MUDLLE,’ SIR?”

A SPARTAN OF THE SEA

By

J. S. COLEBROOK ELKINGTON

WHEN the sea means business about Lat. 43 degrees South, ships become aware of the fact, to the detriment of their deck-fittings and the ruination of their skippers' tempers.

The barque *Sayonara*, ninety days out from Liverpool, was no exception to the rule, and for six days she had been under bare sticks and doing a devil's dance of her peculiar own, with a sou'-westerly gale as Master of the Ceremonies.

The wind had dropped suddenly to a stiff breeze, so that they could get some sail on her, but she still dived and smacked into the strong seas, with an occasional variation by way of taking in a few tons of water from the crest of a racing wave, and swashing it out again through the smashed bulwarks on her next roll.

All this was highly interesting to her solitary passenger, and he yarned with the skipper in the chart-house in the manner of one who has had experiences.

He was young, so that experiences were still things to be sought after and made much of, with no mercenary ideas of their value as "copy."

The skipper, an iron-visaged Liverpool man, swayed in a revolving-chair while discoursing

on things in general, and lubricated his throat with a third whisky.

Carroll listened politely, as one should listen to the discourse of a marine monarch, for he knew that another "nip" would produce lurid reminiscences of Eastern ports in ante-Treaty days, as seen through the crimson glasses of youth fresh from a long voyage.

A "hard-case skipper" the men called old Tatchell, but he had one soft spot in his scarred old heart, and that was for his son Jim, mate of the *Sayonara*.

As Carroll lay back on the settee under the bookcase, where an odd volume of *Admiralty Records* was cannoning off Novie's *Tables* and the *Sea Captain's Medical Guide*, his eyes sought the faded tin-type of Jim's mother over the table.

For want of a better subject he tried to reason out the causes that had brought such a couple together, and had produced so fine a blend from opposite qualities.

The skipper went ahead for the twentieth time that voyage with the story of Jim's youth.

"I told you his mother and the two youngest went with the fever at Greenock in '69," the old man was saying.

"Well, when I come back from Iguique he was ten year old and livin' with his aunt Sophia at Glasgow. Come to meet me with his clothes

all tore, and the blood runnin' from his little nose, and says he'd licked his cousin Joe, which Sophia said too, and also that she couldn't keep such a firebrand in a house that had always been godly.

"She was a straight-walkin' woman was Sophia, and I took her advice, and put him to a boardin' school. But, bless you, he run away continual, and next voyage I took him to sea with me, where he was always wantin' to be.

"He's got his master's ticket now, and he'll have the *Sayonara* next voyage, and the prettiest girl in Liverpool for a wife. Ropes-ended it all into him I did."

The old man wound up proudly, if a trifle irrelevantly.

The rhythmic clank of the pumps sounded from forward, and the starboard door swung open to admit the sou'-wester-covered head and broad shoulders of the mate himself.

"Will you have a look round, sir? The carpenter says there's a foot in the well, and I've put the watch on the pumps. Fore-to'-gallant yard's sprung too, I think."

"All right," answered the skipper, as he scrambled after his sea-boots.

An albatross slid across the parallelogram of leaden sky that showed through the doorway, and the old man shook his fist at it with a complicated profanity.

"Lucky bird, isn't it, sir?" asked Carroll demurely, having heard him on the subject before.

"Lucky bird be damned!" roared the old man, stopping in the middle of hauling on one big boot. "Killed my brother Joe, them lucky birds did, when he fell overboard from the old *Shaftesbury*. Picked the top of his head off before we could get a boat out. Take the rifle

and see if you can put a bullet into some of 'em. Bloomin' rot about lucky birds!"

The mate winked appreciatively and started after his father along the wet decks.

Carroll took the Winchester from its slings, rooted out a few cartridges, and stepped gingerly across the door-sill.

As he made his way aft, the wreck of the deck-fittings impressed itself forcibly. The chocks amidships held a few ragged splinters that represented the trim lifeboat of a week ago, and the gig had disappeared entirely from the deck-house roof.

The *Sayonara* was a flush-decked ship of a model seldom seen now, and the seas had made several clean sweeps of her, breaking the iron bulwarks in a dozen places.

Two days before, a spare span, handled battering-ram fashion by a sea, had shattered the awnings and covers of the after-hatchway, and the damage had been temporarily repaired with boards and tarpaulin at the cost of a broken arm to the second mate.

A certain black book of Lloyd's came vividly into Carroll's mind as he clawed his way aft, but the sweep of an albatross so close overhead that he could hear the rattle of the great wings roused him up.

The helmsman was a Finn, and, as he stared at the rifle, Carroll foresaw some amusement.

"Shoot albatross, Yonny?" he said. The wild eyes of the seaman looked unearthly in their protest.

"Not shoot, sir!" he cried, letting go of the wheel with one hand to wave a vigorous negative. "No luck after. Bad luck!"

A short cross-wave hit the rudder as he spoke, and the wheel tore itself from the man's grasp, so that the ship fell off and took the top of a sea over her bow.

In response came a terrific roar from for'ard, devoting the helmsman's bodily organs to a horrible doom. The Finn grabbed the spokes and fixed his eyes on the sea ahead.

Carroll grinned, and with his eyes measured the range of the great white breast that swung and quivered aloft over the grey yeast-topped seas.

He was a good shot, and he waited, judging the distance that would allow the wind and the impetus of the bird's flight to overtake the ship and bring the body aboard.

The Finn glanced round at intervals with real terror in his gaze, till the rifle spoke sharply.

"Look out!" yelled Carroll.

The helmsman ducked, and a feathered mass whizzed by him, landing with a crash on the deck.

The great wings beat the planks with a few thundering blows, and then lay quiet, the cruel eyes opened and shut, and a little stream of blood ran over the white breast to spread out on the white deck.

"Good boy!" yelled the skipper from for'ard.

Carroll lashed the great body to a stanchion, and waited for a second shot as the other birds closed up near enough for him to see their cruel eyes, ever fixed on the grey seas below.

The old man's voice came aft in gusts of nautical orders and blessings. At last he exploded in a gigantic effort of profanity of such scope and power that Carroll turned to see what was wrong.

A thin weedy Cockney was laying out on the fore-top-gallant yard and the skipper capered beneath with uplifted fist.

"Lay out, you cross-eyed son of a burnt Bristol blanket! You Limehouse scum, lay out,

or I'll come up there and make you sing a new tune—"

"The yawd 'a sprung, sir!" piped the Thames sailor, a raw hand on his first voyage. "S'elp me, I can't go no farther! It ain't safe!"

"Safe, you mutinous rat—safe! I'll learn you some sailorising directly!"

"Let me go aloft, sir," said the mate. "It's a bit beyond him, and I want to see if there's anything else gone."

He sprang into the port ratlines and ran up with easy grace, reached the top, and started out along the foot-ropes.

The Cockney clawed his way down to starboard, and slunk behind a scuttle-butt to escape the old man's eye.

"Sprung a bit, sir," shouted the mate. "Nothing much. The brace-cap's worked loose, though."

He went along the yard and craned over to look at the cap, poised on one leg in the foot-ropes.

Carroll admired the easy pose of his figure silhouetted against the grey sky, a contrast to the usual lumbering Dutchman one sees aloft in deep-sea ships.

Suddenly the foot-rope snapped.

A clutch with his arm at the yard missed, and as the ship ducked into the sea the mate fell twenty feet on to the yard below, shot off again, and disappeared into the heart of a grey sea.

It was all over in an instant, and to Carroll it seemed like a theatrical effect.

His actual reasoning faculties did not take it in, and for a moment he stood staring at the group forward, made visible over the low deck-house by the lift of a sea—the captain gazing at the ends of a frayed rope, the men on the port handles of the pumps preparing to lift, while their mates to starboard stared up open-

mouthed, their hands raised on the handles above their heads.

Then a white face showed on the quarter, and the skipper ran furiously along the deck shouting to the men to get to their stations.

The reality of it all came with a shock.

Carroll rushed for a wheel-grating and hove it overboard, roaring to the helmsman to bring the ship to ; but the Finn only shook his head, and stared at the compass with wide blue eyes.

Tatchell reached the taffrail and stood for a moment glaring at the great rollers that hove their tops far above the level of the deck, and then lifted the vessel with a mighty swing as they passed under her.

He knew better than anybody on board that to bring the ship broadside on in such a sea would be to roll her under.

The boats were gone, and already the great birds hovered over the white patch that showed out astern when the ship lifted to a sea.

His face grew grey in an instant, and his lips moved. "Brother—and son too—O God!"

He turned with blazing eyes and took the rifle from Carroll's hands, adjusted the sight with steady fingers, and held himself ready for a shot.

Carroll had a binocular in his pocket, and as they rose to a sea he fixed the glasses on the mate.

One of the birds made a swoop even as he looked, and the struggling man tried to grasp its neck.

He missed, and the next view showed a stream of blood trickling over his face. Carroll put down the glasses and turned away sick.

"Can't you do something?" he cried, involuntarily.

The old man seemed not to hear him ; and almost as he spoke, the mate's head and arms came plainly into view against the breast of a wave.

A molly-hawk hovered above him, poised to strike, and the old man threw the rifle to his shoulder.

The second of sighting seemed an eternity, but at last the rifle cracked.

The figure astern threw up its arms, and the birds rose with a sudden frightened sweep.

The next wave showed nothing.

"Good God!" whispered Carroll, "you've shot *him*!"

For a minute the old man stood staring, with the Winchester still at his shoulder.

Carroll took him by the sleeve with trembling fingers.

Then he faced round and threw down the rifle.

"Yes," he said ; "I shot my boy! The birds would have been crueller."

He walked swiftly along the deck, and shut himself in his room.

The men came aft in twos and threes and asked whispered questions of Carroll, staring into the grey hills astern.

Only the Finn remained silent, his blue eyes glancing alternately at the card in the binnacle and the racing seas, till Carroll came and stood beside him.

Then he looked at the great bird still lashed to the stanchion and shook his head.

"Bad luck—always!" he said.



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"Wot's the row up the court, Bill?"

"Bob Smith was kissing my wife and 'is old woman caught him."

THE AMEER'S REVENGE

BY

ROSE GERMAN-REED

THE Indian frontier war that had waged fiercely for the past ten months was over at last, and peace was being signed in the Ameer's palace.

When the formalities were concluded, the defeated monarch, a tall dark-visaged man of noble bearing, turned courteously to General Francis Wykeham, the veteran leader of the British forces, who had by his skill and intrepid daring brought the struggle to a successful finish.

"I am proud to speak with one who is so courageous and so learned in the art of war as yourself, General," said the Ameer. "My sons and my chief men were also brave and skilled in battle; but see, you have compassed their death—none can stand against you. It is well. 'Tis the fate of war.

"You are the victor, and we must all bow to your will; and now since we have signed the peace between our countries, let us also make peace between ourselves personally. Will you do me the honour, General, of accepting this gift from me as a token of my friendship and admiration. Keep it as an heirloom in your family and it will bring you luck."

As he spoke, he motioned with his hand towards a tall ebony cabinet, exquisitely carved, and inlaid with ivory—a magnificent piece of workmanship.

The General, although somewhat surprised,

accepted the present gracefully; and when, three weeks later, he sailed for England, the ebony cabinet was included among his luggage.

Christmas time was drawing near. At Ayleton Manor preparations were going forward for spending the season in good old-fashioned style, and a large house-party was already beginning to assemble within its hospitable portals.

A newly arrived guest was wending his way through the long dark avenue that led from the gates to the house.

A small thin man, with an unmistakably Oriental face, lined with age and study, his large lustrous black eyes having something indescribably pathetic in their depths.

At his ring the door was opened, and he was ushered into a big oak-panelled hall, where a merry group of people were gathered round a blazing log fire.

A handsome graceful woman rose from beside the tea-table as he entered, and came to meet him with hands outstretched.

"My dear Professor, this is indeed kind of you!" she exclaimed, cordially. "We hardly dared to hope that you would accept our invitation."

"It is very good of you, Mrs. Wykeham, to care about the society of a dry old fellow like myself," replied the Professor, who spoke perfect English. "But you know I shall always have

a soft corner in my heart for my old pupil Kenneth."

He turned with a smile towards her husband, who stood beside her, and took his hand in a close grip.

"We were all talking of ghosts just before you came in," observed a pretty dark-haired girl from the opposite side of the hearth. "A proper Christmas subject."

"I don't believe in them myself," said a handsome broad-shouldered young fellow who sat beside her.

The old man shook his head. "I have seen so many strange things in my own country," he replied, quietly, "that I think no one has a right to deny positively that there are such things as ghosts and spirits. Everybody may not have the power to see them, but that is no proof that they do not exist."

"There, George, consider yourself vanquished!" exclaimed the dark-haired girl, whose name was Agnes Rossiter.

"You see, the Professor is on my side. Besides, haven't we just been telling you that there is a haunted room in this very house."

"Now, Agnes, that is too bad of you to spring the family horror on the Professor when he has only just arrived," put in Mrs. Wykeham, with a nervous laugh. "You will frighten him away."

"Not at all," said the old man, smiling. "I am interested, and would like to see the room, if I may."

"Oh, certainly!" replied the hostess. "You shall look at it after tea. There is not much to see, and so far we have not had any strange experiences; but then you know we have not been in the house very long. My husband only inherited the property a short time ago, from his grandfather, and we have been installed here barely two months."

"Of course every old house has some ghostly legend attached to it," remarked Mr. Wykeham. "But there is rarely any truth in them. Now for my part I don't believe for one moment the rumours connected with Ayleton Manor."

"But I observe that you have finished your tea, Professor. Come along, and you shall see the room for yourself."

The host led the way up the wide shallow staircase to a long gallery that ran across one end of the hall, and turning to the right, paused before a door at the extreme end of the corridor.

On advancing into the room, they found it to be a most cheerful apartment, with a warm bright paper on the walls, and the furniture upholstered in the same pleasant tint. In place of the huge four-poster generally supposed to be part and parcel of the appointments of a haunted chamber, stood a modern brass bedstead.

It differed, however, from the ordinary in one respect, namely, that it was covered from head to foot with a voluminous net curtain, suspended from a crown in the ceiling. Facing the bed and placed against the opposite wall stood a tall magnificently carved ebony cabinet, inlaid with ivory, evidently a product of the East.

"Mosquito curtains!" exclaimed the Professor in a tone of surprise, pointing to the bed.

"Yes, my grandfather lived for years in India," replied Kenneth Wykeham; "and he grew so accustomed to net curtains over his bed that he could not sleep without them, and introduced them into his English home."

"Aren't they nice!" exclaimed Madge Holden. "I do like this room, and I'm so glad you've promised to let me sleep here to-night, Fanny."

"Well, you are more courageous than I am," laughed Mrs. Wykeham; "I am much too nervous to try anything of the sort."

"What is the story connected with the room?" inquired Professor Curjambi.

"It used to be the principal guest-chamber," replied the host; "and although it has always had the reputation of being haunted, nothing was ever seen or heard until my grandfather, General Francis Wykeham, returned for the last time from India.

"One of his friends, an old Army man, came to stay with him, slept in this room, and the very next morning was found by his valet raving mad. The incident was not connected with the room at the time; but a few weeks later one of the General's nieces came on a visit to him, slept here, and was discovered early in the morning crouched outside the door, weak and exhausted, and quite prostrate with terror.

"All she could do was to moan, 'The horrible face—The horrible face,' and to insist on leaving the Manor at once.

"The General grew annoyed, as he did not believe in ghosts himself, and he had his own bed removed in here, in order to dispel the superstition of the servants.

"The first morning he was as well as usual, but the second day they found him dead, with his eyes fixed in a look of horror.

"After that the house was untenanted for a while, until we came into it. This room has not been occupied as yet; and the only experience we have had was the one I have already mentioned, the frightened servant girl."

"Well, after hearing all this, I think you must have nerves of iron, Madge, if you still persist in sleeping here!" said Agnes Rossiter, with a slight shiver.

"I don't care!" cried Madge; "I should love to see a ghost, so I mean to have a try, anyway."

The Professor said nothing. He appeared to be lost in thought.

They turned to leave the room, the Professor pausing before the ebony cabinet.

"This is a very lovely piece of furniture," he remarked, looking at it with interest. "Indian too, I see."

"Yes; it was given to the General by the Ameer of Arkhestan after peace was concluded."

"Ah! it is a possession indeed." And with another glance of admiration, the Professor followed the others from the room.

Later on in the evening, while Agnes was dressing for dinner, she heard a tap at her door.

"May I come in?" cried Madge's voice.

"Yes, certainly," replied Miss Rossiter; "come along by all means."

"Why, Agnes, what a peculiar necklace you are wearing!" she exclaimed presently. "I have never seen it before, surely." Miss Rossiter put up her hand to her throat with a laugh.

"Oh! it's not a necklace really," she answered. "It is only tattooed, and it was done when I was a tiny baby. I was born in India, you know, and I believe some strange old man decorated me like this to please my mother. I fancy they are letters of some sort arranged so as to look like beads, but I don't know what they mean. I always wear a high collar of pearls in the evening to hide it, for it is rather ugly;" and Agnes having put the finishing touches to her toilette, they descended to the drawing-room together.

When the hour came to retire for the night, Mrs. Wykeham escorted her sister personally to the haunted room, and having seen her safely ensconced, bade her good-night.

"You know Agnes is sleeping in the next room," she said, as she turned to go. "So



Dirty Gerty.—"I DON'T BELIEVE IN THIS 'ERE MIXED BATHIN'."
Weary Willie.—"SO DON'T I."

if you are terribly frightened, Madge, you have only to call and she will be sure to hear you."

"Oh! I shan't be frightened!" answered Madge, with a merry laugh; "I'm simply longing to see the ghost."

She was too excited, however, to do more than doze fitfully, starting up every quarter of an hour to send a questioning glance round the room. Nothing, however, was to be seen or heard for some time, until suddenly waking from one of these short intervals of sleep, a slight sound attracted her attention.

In spite of all her vaunted courage a chill seemed to fall on her heart, and she sat up in bed, straining her eyes in the direction whence the sound had come.

The night-light was flickering, and its feeble flame cast moving shadows across the tall ebony cabinet facing the frightened girl.

Indeed, as she looked, these shadows appeared to take bodily shape, and to her excited imagination it seemed as though the dark ungainly form of a man stepped forth from the ebon doors!

The form was approaching the bed.

Then suddenly the mosquito curtains were dashed apart, and she beheld a dark face hung about with long black hair, great glowing eyes, and white teeth that gleamed and flashed in the dim light.

At the same moment the night-light flickered out, she felt supple fingers clutching at her throat, and with a wild scream she fell back senseless on to the pillow.

When she came to, Agnes Rossiter was bending over her, dropping water on to her face.

"It's all right, Madge," she said, soothingly; "I am with you. Tell me what startled you. I heard you scream and rushed to the rescue."

"The ebony cabinet!" moaned Madge,

struggling into a sitting posture. "It came from there."

Agnes looked round in surprise, and advancing to the cabinet, flung wide the doors, holding her candle so that the light flashed from shelf to shelf. It was quite empty.

"There is nothing here, dear," she said, returning to the bedside.

"What did you think you saw?"

"A man, an awful dark man. I tell you he came from the cabinet, and he tried to strangle me. I felt his hands about my throat. Look, there must be marks."

Agnes held the light nearer, and saw that Madge's pretty white neck was all bruised with finger-prints, and even scratched in one place.

"I had better rouse Fanny and Kenneth," she said. "This may be the work of some burglar."

"No, no; don't call my sister," murmured Madge, holding her fast.

"Don't leave me. Stay with me until morning."

Agnes, although much perplexed, consented; and lying down beside her, the two girls presently fell into a deep peaceful sleep, which lasted until they were aroused by the appearance of the maid with the early morning tea.

Madge, although still pale and shaken, had recovered her nerve, and was quite ready presently to relate her experiences to her sister and brother-in-law and Professor Curjambi. The latter listened attentively until she had finished, then he turned to Miss Rossiter.

"Did you see anything when you went to her assistance?" he inquired.

"No; the room was plunged in darkness, so that I could see nothing," answered Agnes. "But I fancied somebody passed me as I

entered, though I could not swear to it. Then I lit the candles, and found Madge insensible!"

They again repaired to the haunted room, and the Professor examined the cabinet closely. The upper portion was divided into shelves, while the lower contained three drawers, all of which were found to be empty.

"I cannot understand it!" said the old Indian with a sigh, as he reclosed the doors. "There is absolutely no clue to be obtained here. And yet Miss Holden positively asserts that the figure emerged from this piece of furniture."

Just then Agnes Rossiter stretched up her arm to fasten a little bolt that the Professor had forgotten to secure; and as she did so the dainty breakfast jacket that she was wearing slipped a little from her neck, revealing the strange tattoo marks. The Professor's eye fell on them, and he started forward.

"Excuse me!" he said; "will you allow me to look at that tattooed necklace round your throat?"

Agnes looked surprised, but she turned down her collar and permitted the old man to examine the design.

"Do you know what this means?" he asked, looking keenly at her. She shook her head.

"It was done in India when I was a baby. That is all I know about it."

"Ah! Well, it is a kind of charm, and I will explain it to you at some future time." He paused and pondered deeply for some moments.

"Miss Rossiter," he said at length, "I am going to ask you a great favour. Will you sleep in this room to-night? I can assure you that no harm will come to you, and you may be able to help us."

Agnes hesitated, then she placed her hand in his.

"Yes," she said; "I will do what you wish."

That night she occupied the haunted room, and the next morning found her in her usual health and spirits.

"Well," inquired the Professor anxiously, as he met her.

"Madge was right!" replied Agnes. "There is something mysterious in that room and in the cabinet. Just as she described, I saw the figure of a man emerge from the doors; but instead of approaching the bed it seemed to waver and hesitate, as though something were keeping it back. And then, just as happened with Madge, the light went out and I could see nothing more, though I heard a sort of angry gasp. And strange to say I felt no fear whatever."

"Nothing more happened, then?" said the Professor.

"Nothing more."

"We'll ransack that cabinet, if we have to chop it into splinters!" cried Kenneth Wykeham, hotly. "Come along, Professor."

They tore upstairs, and reaching the fatal room Mr. Wykeham flung open the doors.

"There is no place here where anyone could be concealed," he exclaimed, tapping the shelves and sides. The Professor meanwhile was staring at it intently.

"Look, Kenneth!" he cried, excitedly; "see what a space there must be at the top of the cabinet, right above the topmost shelf. Surely that cannot be solid wood. The top must be hollow."

"Yes," he exclaimed; "this top is hollow, for it is fastened down with a number of tiny bolts. I must prize them open with my knife."

He set to work without delay, and presently with a mighty heave he wrenched open the lid and glanced inside.

"Great God!" he cried, in tones of horror; and springing to the floor, he staggered back with a set, drawn face.

The Professor pushed him aside, and running up the steps with great agility for a man of his years, gazed into the cabinet.

Within the space at the top, which was very deep, lay stretched at full length the body of an Indian fakir.

He was a long gaunt-limbed man, unclothed save for a white cloth about his middle, with long black matted hair hanging about his face, great eyes fixed in a wide ghastly stare, and long white cruel-looking teeth, smeared with blood.

"This is just what I suspected!" said the Professor, drawing a long breath as he descended.

"What in Heaven's name is it?" cried Kenneth Wykeham, hoarsely. The old man looked at him impressively with his deep lustrous eyes.

"A human vampire!" he replied, quietly. "Such things live yet in the Far East. This is the hellish revenge of an implacable enemy. The Ameer gave this cabinet and its foul con-

tents to your grandfather that it might be to him and to his family a certain death-trap."

"What made you suspect this?" gasped Kenneth.

"I recognised that the tattooed necklace round Miss Rossiter's throat was in reality a charm-symbol against such wreakers of evil," replied Professor Curjambi. "When she was in the room, the evil thing had no power. That gave me the clue to the mystery."

"But the creature apparently is not always active," said the host, glancing with a shudder towards the cabinet. "For months he must have lain quiescent—"

"You forget that in life he was a fakir," interrupted the old man; "and the natives believe his mystic powers of endurance would cling to him even after death. Hard for you and me to understand, but still it would appear to be an awful fact."

"Well, I'm going to test the fakir-vampire's powers of endurance for good and all," firmly replied Kenneth.

That afternoon, in a quiet corner of the grounds, a huge pile of stout logs and brushwood burned fiercely for many hours.

From its heart rose and was dissipated in vapour the last of the Ameer's cruel revenge.



"HAVE YOU ANY SUCKING PIGS COMING ALONG, MR. BRIGGS?"

"NO, SIR. I'VE TAKEN NO INTEREST IN PIGS SINCE MY POOR SON DIED."

STRONGER THAN DEATH

By

MRS. H. H. PENROSE

“**A**RE you not going to congratulate me, Marian?” I asked; and I could hear the wistfulness in my own voice, just as if it had belonged to someone else.

She was the oldest and dearest friend I had—now, and I was feeling her silence keenly.

“I will say something conventional, if you like,” she answered; “but—oh, you must have known what I would think when you told me!”

“Do, please, be like yourself,” I entreated. “Indeed, I did not know you had such an aversion to the idea of a second marriage.”

“Only,” she said, in a low, constrained voice, “to this particular second marriage.”

“How can you do it?” she cried. “You who were Eva’s friend and loved her! We have known one another all our lives, but you never cared for me as you cared for her. I used even to be jealous. And now you are going to take her place—to take everything that was dear and precious to her while she lived—quite calmly, as you might step into the place of a dead stranger.

“It isn’t even as if you hadn’t known her in her married life. In that case I could have understood. But there was never a moment’s break in your friendship; you were staying with her constantly; you learned to associate everything in and about her home with her.

“You looked on, and saw how happy she was. Elsie! Did you begin to make him care for you before she died?”

“How can you think such cruel, wicked thoughts?” I sobbed. “I never thought of Edgar Baron as a possible husband until about six weeks ago, and then Eva had been two years dead.

“We are both lonely, and we only look to make each other happy by companionship. If he had quite forgotten Eva, and were turning lightly from his old allegiance, don’t you think he would have chosen a young girl? But he is choosing me—and I am over thirty—because I was her friend and he knew me first through her. I cannot see it as you do.”

“I suppose not,” she said, drily. “And as you are going to do the thing, it’s just as well you can’t. Just as well for your peace of mind.”

“And you won’t come to my marriage?” I asked, moving away from her, and feeling very sore.

She shook her head.

“No,” she said. “I should be thinking of Eva’s all the time. I should see her between you and him. I should be asking myself at every pause, ‘Is there any constancy in the world?’ I should hate myself for having part or lot in the matter.”

I was on my feet then, feeling that I did well to be angry.

"Good-bye," I said. "I am sorry I asked for a little kindness which it seems impossible that you can give me. I shan't make the same mistake again."

She retracted nothing, and her unreasonableness left me with a sense of deadly chill for the next four and twenty hours.

I knew Edgar Baron as thoroughly as one can get to know a man only when he has no motive for trying to make himself appear perfect in one's eyes, and my knowledge had led me to admire and respect him exceedingly.

I believed honestly that I could be content in a marriage of friendship; but I was very ignorant of the needs of my own nature.

Before I had been a month married I knew that it was impossible to be Edgar Baron's wife without giving him a full measure of worship, and I began to long with the whole force of my being for a return in kind.

By every means in my power I tried to win his whole heart from the grasp of the dead woman who had been so dear to us both; and, after a time, it seemed that I might succeed.

During the first few weeks of our honeymoon he spoke constantly of Eva, but the habit weakened under my striving to fill him with the love of me; and by the time we had come home to Baronscourt her name had been tenderly put away, so that there, where every turn must necessarily bring a memory of her, no allusion was made to that gracious presence which had gone in and out among the familiar places for eight sweet years.

At last a day came when I felt that my life was crowned.

He told me that he was my lover as well as my friend and husband, and I lay in his arms

believing that there was nothing left to wish for.

On the evening of that glorious day, Edgar and I were walking in the rose garden which had been one of Eva's dear delights.

We were holding hands and dropping soft words into each other's ears, when presently he stooped to pick a rose for me—and we were separated.

As he raised himself I was aware of a *Shadowy Third* that divided us. He handed me the warm red rose across the *Intruding One*, and I shivered as I took it.

"You are cold, dearest," he said. "Let us go in."

And we moved towards the house.

The *Presence*—nebulous, impalpable—moved with us.

He did not seem to know that it was there, and yet he did not try to touch me again; and to me, seeing, this seemed perfectly natural.

He could not have touched me without touching *It*, for *It* came between us.

We passed from the softness of the summer evening into the lighted drawing-room, and the *Presence* came too.

From that hour I was never alone with my husband.

I knew who it was from the first; but, as the days and nights passed, the *Presence* became more defined, until at last it seemed hardly less the real Eva than I had known her in the flesh.

She never came to me when I was alone, or when others besides Edgar were present; but as a third she was always there; and a time came—that ever it should have been so!—when I longed to be alone or with others, that I might be free from her who came only with him.

If he too knew that she was there, he never told me so; but his care for me seemed greater than ever.

He commented openly on the outward signs of that mental agony the cause of which was either unknown or ignored ; and because I was ill beyond all possibility of pretence to the contrary, he insisted on taking me up to Scotland in his yacht, declaring that sea breezes had never failed to do me good.

I had been many times in that yacht before, but then Eva had always been there.

She was there now too.

The first day out, having as yet been only amid the stir and bustle of the deck, I began almost to hope ; and, presently, weary of sun and wind, I crept down to the saloon to rest my tired eyes from the glare of the sails and the sea.

"It is only Baronscourt that she haunts," I told myself insistently. "Here I shall have peace, and I shall be well again and happy."

Then Edgar followed me down to the saloon, and immediately I knew that she too was there, although I looked nowhere but straight into his eyes, because of the fear that was upon me.

He put out his hand, and at once she was standing in front of him, sweet-faced and sad. I saw her then, and shrank back—needlessly—out of his reach.

That night, as we sat together by the wheel in the moonlight, she came to us again, and I was forced to make room for her, sitting a little apart that she might take her place between us.

So we had sat on other moonlight nights in the years that were dead but unforgotten, and the dead woman, coming back out of the dead years, insisted silently that nothing should be changed. I longed to speak to her, to beg the mercy of her absence ; but in this I was helpless, for I could not let Edgar hear me, and she never came to me alone.

Once only I whispered very softly in her ear, "Eva, have pity! Can it do you any good?"

And my husband, hearing an indefinite murmur, said—

"What is it, darling?"

Then, as if his words had been spoken to her, and paying no heed at all to me, she laid a shadowy arm on his shoulder, and touched the hand that rested on the wheel.

Her gestures were familiar : I had seen her do this once before.

And all the time a strange look was growing in his eyes. The belief strengthened in me that she came to him when he was alone, although not to me, and the worst fear of all seized me.

What if she should win him back again, away from me, at last?

At my suggestion half a dozen friends, men and women, were asked to join us when we reached the Clyde, and I arranged matters so that he should never be alone, and he and I never alone together while the trip lasted.

Then my health began to return, and with it the beauty that I had been fearing to lose for ever ; and I could see, with a great elation, that Edgar looked at me continually, and that his eyes were full of love.

But in six weeks we were at Baronscourt once more ; and on the very first evening, as soon as we were alone after dinner, she came to us again.

Her face was quite distinct to me, and I was struck by the look of fair youthfulness that had always been noticeable in it when she was alive. Just as one remarks newly the characteristics of a living friend whom one has not met for some time, so I took note of many little things about that pale ghost who had not been near me for a few short, bright weeks.

I went to the piano, and she followed, just a step in advance of Edgar.

I saw that as I looked over my shoulder at them both; and it seemed to me then that he was unconscious of her nearness, although, for some mysterious reason, he never attempted to usurp the space occupied by her.

Many such evenings followed, and became unendurable. I could see that Edgar was a little hurt by my evident wish for more society; but he pleased me in that as in everything in his power, and we began to entertain a good deal, and to dine out frequently.

But there was never a day at some moment of which I did not see her.

I was beginning to wonder how long I could endure the strain without going mad when, very unexpectedly, I met Marian Vesey again.

Directly after dinner she drew me apart in the great drawing-room, that might have accommodated a dozen undisturbed *tête-à-têtes*.

"Are you happy?" she said; for it was her way to go straight to the core of a matter.

I hesitated to answer her, having no desire to take her fully into my confidence, and recognising the futility of anything resembling falsehood under the searching light of her steel-grey eyes.

"I thought so," she said, putting her own interpretation on my undecided manner. "Heaven help you now, for I knew how it would be, and I did my best to stop you."

I was still silent, considering in my heart how little it was that she really knew, and she added more gently—

"Wouldn't it do you any good to talk it out?"

It wasn't much, but being sympathy of a sort—albeit a blind sort—it was too much for me; and the next thing I knew, I was holding myself in with both hands, on the verge of an hysterical outburst.

"Is it what I foresaw?" she asked, gently

patting my hand. "That you seem to see her everywhere about you?"

"No," I said, so low that I could scarcely hear myself. "It is that I *do* see her."

Marian started violently.

"Do you mean that literally?" she asked. "Are you mad, Elsie?"

"No," I said again. "But I think I shall be soon."

Then I told her all that I knew myself.

She insisted that it was my duty to see a doctor, perhaps even three—a brain specialist, a stomach specialist, and an oculist.

I think the dreariness of my smile at this point must have carried much conviction with it, for I soon saw that she was taking my trouble very seriously.

"If you take my advice," she said, after a little thought, "you will tell your husband all about it. Then if he has seen anything, he will tell you; and at least you will understand each other. I have nothing better than this to suggest."

It had seemed to me, although I did not quite know why, impossible that I should speak to him of Eva's Presence. Suggested now by another person, it seemed but a reasonable thing to do.

I accused myself of morbidness, and took a great resolution. Eva was with us in the carriage going home; but I said nothing then, having arranged with myself to wait until the next evening, which was to be spent at home.

I thought over my resolution all the next day, and by the time dinner was over I was in a state of nervous excitement that made it impossible for me to stay quiet for a moment.

I moved restlessly hither and thither about the drawing-room, keeping my back to the place where I knew she was standing—beside

him on the hearth-rug. But at last he called me, and came to me; and she came too.

"Elsie," he said, "don't walk about the room any more, dearest. Come and sit by me, and let us have a quiet talk for once. It seems like half a century since my last opportunity of making love to my own wife."

He spoke playfully, but there was a ring of anxiety in his voice nevertheless.

He held out his arms, but the *Presence* slipped into them, and prevented their reaching me.

"Won't you come?" he said, still reaching towards me; and there was a great trouble in his eyes.

"How can I come," I asked in return, "while she is there? She never lets me come."

There was a sofa near us, and we both sank down upon it, because we were trembling so that we could stand no longer.

But Eva sat between us, and it was across her that we looked into each other's eyes.

Then I told him all; and still she sat there, listening, her great eyes resting always calmly upon him who was the husband of us both.

He groaned aloud when I had finished speaking, and let his head fall upon his hands.

"Is she here now?" he asked, a minute later, in a hollow whisper.

"She is touching you," I said; and a great shudder shook him from head to foot.

Later he told me that, although he had never seen her, he had been aware of an intangible something that intervened when he sought me with hands or lips; but he had believed this influence, or whatever it might be called, to be the concentrated force of my own unwillingness.

He had imagined that I was ceasing to love him, and to the same cause he had very naturally attributed my constant wish for society,

my apparent dislike to being alone with him. I could see that he was possessed by horror—that the shock had unnerved him utterly.

Yet I was selfishly glad that I had told him, because now he could misunderstand me no longer—he could never again think that I did not love him.

Already the winter was upon us, and he was to attend the first meet of the season next morning; but he came to breakfast haggard and ghastly, and I begged him not to ride. I felt sure that he was unfit for it.

"I think I must," he said, wearily. "It will be a rest for you, and perhaps a little violent exercise will do me good."

And as I came towards him, Eva put her arms about him, and pulled him gently to the door.

I watched him from the window as he rode away in his bright coat; and three hours later he was brought back to me—dying.

Then—ah! their mistaken kindness!—because there was no hope, they left us alone together for the last time. And the *Presence* lay beside him, her hair across his wounded breast, her arms about him, her lips pressed to his.

She was drawing him away with her to the world of shadows, and she would not let me come close to him who was my dear love as well as hers.

"Elsie, dearest!" he whispered, while his breath failed. "Kiss me once before I leave you."

And I, weeping bitterly, cried, "I cannot, for she is there. She will not give me room to come."

But the nearness of death had made him deaf and blind. He could only feel and murmur.

"Ah! love!" he sighed. "Your lips are on mine. Dear love! Dear love!"



Scene: Outside Popular Theatre.

“I WANT A ROAST TATER; AN^d MIND YER MUST PUT PLENTY OF BUTTER ON IT,
'CAUSE IT'S FOR A GENT IN THE STALLS!”

VARIN, THE DEVIL-WORSHIPPER

BY

HENRY HERING

IT was my custom to dine with Richard Hargreaves every Sunday he was in London.

His habits were extremely methodical; and although he used to absent himself from town for many months at a time, he always fixed beforehand the exact date of his return, and I never knew him vary from it.

So certain was I that he had come back according to promise on Saturday the 5th of January last, after a twelvemonths' absence, that on the following evening I made my way to his house in Russell Square with the absolute certainty of again grasping my friend's hands, and of hearing from his lips an account of his adventures in the valley of the Orinoco.

I was more than usually anxious to see him, as one of his last letters had been far from satisfactory to me, indicating as it did a mental state altogether new to him.

I rang the bell and knocked.

Before the sound of my last rap had died away the door was flung open, and the housekeeper appeared on the threshold, with a maidservant in the background.

Her look of welcome died away when she saw me, and it was evident that she expected someone else.

"We thought it was Mr. Hargreaves, sir," she said, in apologetic tones.

"You don't mean to say he hasn't come back!" I exclaimed in amazement.

I had known him intimately for twenty years, and, as I have said, I had never known him fail to keep his word.

"Indeed he hasn't, Mr. Field. We had everything ready for him yesterday—fires lighted and dinner waiting—but he never came, nor even sent us word. I can't tell what to think, sir. I'm sadly afraid something has happened to him."

By this time I was in the house, and the door was closed behind me.

Before I had time to reply to Mrs. Crowther there was the sound of furious driving, and a vehicle pulled up smartly outside.

Mrs. Crowther rushed to the door and opened it eagerly.

Then she fell back with a cry of dismay.

They were helping someone out of a cab. It was Hargreaves, but Hargreaves terribly altered.

He leaned heavily on the arm of someone I had not seen before, a man whose striking appearance would have aroused interest anywhere, and who even at that moment divided my attention.

He was tall—over six feet high—and broad in proportion. His deeply bronzed face was also cast in heroic mould. Chin and nose betokened

indomitable will. His eyes were steel blue, so cold and piercing that as they fell upon me they seemed to read my inmost thoughts. His long black hair almost touched his shoulders.

Hargreaves walked slowly up the steps, and nodded coldly to us.

My outstretched hands drooped, the words of welcome froze on my lips, and Mrs. Crowther was dumb.

It was the stranger who broke the silence.

"Mr. Field," he said, with just a suggestion of a foreign accent, "I regret that Mr. Hargreaves is unable to offer you his usual Sunday hospitality. He is tired out after a long and tedious journey, and needs rest."

"That is so, Hargreaves?" he added, in a tone that jarred upon me, conveying as it did more of a command than a question.

"Yes," said Hargreaves wearily, in scarcely more than a whisper, "I need rest—rest."

His eyes met mine for the first time.

Was it my imagination that read in them a piteous look of entreaty.

They shifted furtively to the man at his side, then fell to the ground.

"But surely I can be of some use to you, Hargreaves," I said, in answer to his unspoken words. "You need medical advice. I will fetch a doctor."

"Mr. Hargreaves had the benefit of a doctor's advice until yesterday afternoon, sir, and he doesn't need to avail himself of your kind offer," said the stranger, with cool impertinence.

"At any rate I will stay the night with you, Hargreaves," I said, ignoring the other's presence. "I can't leave you in this condition."

"I'm afraid you will have to do so," said the big man. "Tell Mr. Field he is only upsetting you by his importunity, and that he had better go," he added to Hargreaves.

"You are only upsetting me, Field," said Hargreaves. "Better go."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," I replied; for I was firmly convinced that his companion had obtained an unnatural mastery over him, and held him powerless by sheer force of will.

The door was still open.

Before I had divined his intention, much less striven to resist it, the stranger had taken me by the shoulders in a grip of steel, and thrust me violently out of the house.

As I shot down the steps the door banged to behind me.

Beside myself with anger, I ran up the steps as soon as I had recovered from the impetus, pulled the bell, and rapped loudly at the door.

There was no response. Again I rapped and rang, hoping Mrs. Crowther would let me in, but I rang and rapped in vain. As I was ringing, a postman stopped before the house.

"They must be out, sir," he said.

"Mr. Hargreaves has only just returned—not five minutes ago," I replied.

"Then he must have gone straight to bed, sir, for all the lights are out," said the man as he passed on.

I drew back a few steps and looked up at the house. The hall lamp had been alight a few minutes before, and the dining-room brightly illuminated.

Not a ray of light now came from within. All was in total darkness. There was no sign of life in the house. A deathly silence hung over it.

For perhaps half an hour I stood gazing at the windows of the house, at back and front.

Then as no gleam of light appeared, and as no notice was taken of my further knocking and ringing, I turned homewards.

It may well be imagined that my thoughts did not travel far from the events of the evening.

Again and again I ran them over in my mind, and always ended by cursing my stupidity in allowing myself to be got rid of so easily, leaving my old friend at the mercy of—whom?

I had no difficulty in settling the identity of the big-limbed stranger.

The sight of him had at once recalled the last three letters I had received from Hargreaves.

In the first of these, dated from an unpronounceable village on the Cuchivero, he told me how, when struggling in the upper fastnesses of that river, he had suddenly come face to face with a seeming European, who, according to his own account, had been living for some years a nomad life with a native tribe, sleeping with them under rocks and trees, and eating their parrot, monkey, and lizard food.

At first Hargreaves took him for an enthusiastic orchid-hunter; and although this conjecture proved to be wrong, he never was able to find out why he should have left civilisation for the dangers and inconveniences of native life.

There was a mystery about him from the first—even his nationality was doubtful.

The letter went on to say that this stranger—Varin his name was—after begging Hargreaves in vain to prolong his exploration of the interior, had decided to join him on his way to the coast.

“I don’t like the man,” Hargreaves added. “The other day I came across him deliberately thrashing a woman. He desisted on my interference, but merely shrugged his shoulders at my indignation.

“The moral sense is absolutely lacking in him; and yet I have found out that he practises some peculiar form of worship, and believes in the propitiation of a superior power.

“He is quite unlike any other man I ever met. I look upon him as the last remnant of some mysterious race; and although at times I feel absolute repulsion for him, he exercises a strange fascination over me.”

The next letter was totally different from any I had ever received from Hargreaves.

There was an utter want in it of all that directness and business-like habit that I had always associated with him, and in their place was a painful indecision and uncertainty.

He wrote querulously, like an old man, grumbled at the weather and the food, and said his future movements were doubtful, and incidentally remarked that Varin was with him.

This letter filled me with uneasiness. I concluded that he was ill, for the first time since I had known him; but my anxiety was allayed by a short note by the next mail written in his usual vein, and absolutely free from the morbid symptoms of the last.

He said that Varin had gone a short journey on his own account, but was expected to rejoin him the following week.

Although this letter was so far satisfactory, I had never been able entirely to shake off the uneasiness produced by the former; and the events of the evening now made the connection between the letters terribly clear, for it was evident that Varin’s influence over Hargreaves had grown with terrible rapidity.

It had not been strong enough to induce him to remain in Venezuela, so the man had accompanied him to England, and before the boat reached Liverpool Hargreaves was absolutely at his mercy.

For what hellish purpose Varin was working who could tell.

Nine o’clock the next day found me turning the corner of Russell Square.

As a cab passed me I noticed someone inside waving to me. I called to the driver to stop, and Mrs. Crowther put her head out of the window.

"Oh, Mr. Field," she said, and then she completely broke down.

"How is Mr. Hargreaves this morning?" I asked.

"I haven't seen him, sir. Directly you had gone, Mr. Varin, as he said his name was, gave us notice to leave, and wanted us to go there and then; and poor Mr. Hargreaves nodded 'yes' whenever he wanted him."

"Why didn't you open the door when I rang?"

"I tried to, but Mr. Varin pulled me away, and put the key in his pocket. Then he turned the lights out, and told us to go to bed, as we wouldn't leave the house.

"He marched Mr. Hargreaves to his room, and stayed there, singing in the dark to him half the night through. He was with him when we came down this morning, but wouldn't let us go near him.

"He gave us till nine to get away, and said he would throw us out if we hadn't gone then;" and the good soul was too much overcome even to show her indignation at the affront that had been put upon her.

"What do you think of it all?" I asked, for the mere sake of saying something.

"Think of it, sir!" she replied, with lowered voice. "I dare not say what I think; but if you are going to save Mr. Hargreaves from death or worse, you'll have to be quick. I was driving straight to tell you so now. It's just awful to think of him altered to what he is, and now left all alone with that monster. It won't bear thinking of, sir;" and Mrs. Crowther sank back in the cab, quivering with suppressed emotion.

I tried my best to calm her, took down her address for possible use, and then walked on to the house.

I rang the bell and knocked. There was no reply, but I hardly expected that there would be.

There was nothing to be done but wait outside, in the hope of Varin's eventual appearance; for it would certainly be necessary for him sooner or later to hold some communication with the outside world.

For three hours I paced the end of the square, never taking my eyes off the house, but I waited in vain; and all the time there was growing within me the conviction that I must take some more decided course of action if I wished to be of service to my friend.

As I paced the pavement I anxiously ran over the possibilities of the situation. A dozen wild schemes of rescue occurred to me, only to be dismissed as impracticable; but at last two thoughts stood out clearly in my mind.

As an individual I was powerless. I must seek the aid of the law. And as the clock struck twelve I drove to Scotland Yard.

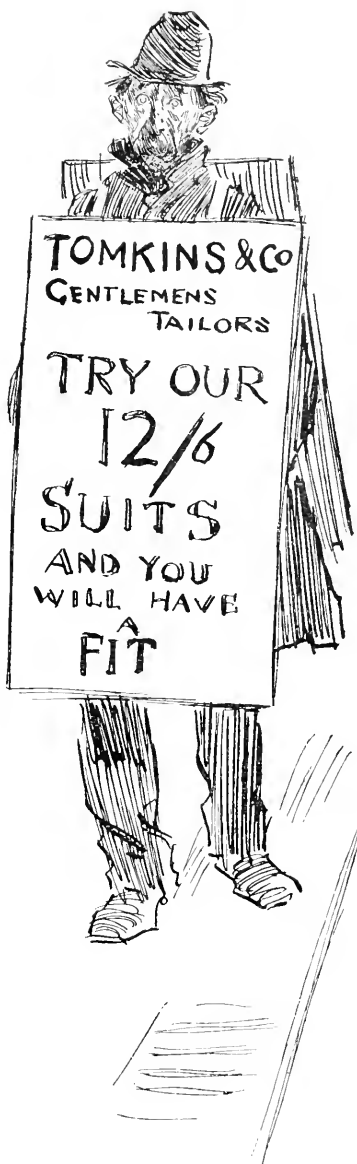
"You say you have reason to believe there is something wrong going on in the house, sir, but you can't say what," remarked the official I saw there.

"It's pretty vague, that. Yes, we have the right to break in if necessary, but we don't care to exercise our power unless we have very solid ground for doing so."

"I shouldn't be here now," I answered, "if I didn't think it was a matter of life and death. The housekeeper only left the house at nine o'clock this morning. Here is her address. Ask her if she thinks all is right or not."

"Women are easily upset," said the man, sentimentously.

"If you had known Mr. Hargreaves a year



PHIL MANN

ago, and then seen him last night, you wouldn't hesitate for a moment," I went on.

"He is a simple wreck; and I don't think he ever had a day's illness before he met this adventurer. Why should Varin dismiss the servant and a housekeeper of fifteen years' faithful service the moment he got in: why should he want to be alone in the house unless he contemplated something wrong?"

"I'll admit it looks queer," said the officer. "We have to be very careful, as I said before, but I think we ought to know what this Mr. Varin is up to. Let me see. It's now half-past twelve, and I'm busy till two o'clock. If you'll call here then, sir, I'll have a couple of men ready to go with us. They shall watch the back of the house while we go round to the front."

It was about half-past two when I rang the bell of Hargreaves' house as a prelude to forcing an entrance.

I did this at the inspector's request for formalities' sake, and never expected a response.

To my surprise there followed the sound of footsteps inside, and a minute later the door was opened by Varin.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" he asked, blandly.

The inspector had his foot inside the door in an instant. "We wish to see Mr. Hargreaves," he said.

"He is ill, and is unable to see anyone," was the reply.

"I know he is ill. That is the reason I am here," said the officer. "I am an inspector of police, and demand admittance."

Varin did not hesitate.

He simply shrugged his shoulders, and said: "By all means, see him if you insist upon it—

for what purpose I cannot tell—but I warn you that he is very ill, and any excitement may have serious consequences."

We followed him up the stairs, and into Hargreaves' room.

He was in bed, and what daylight the heavy blinds allowed to pass fell upon features so aged, so terribly drawn, that I scarcely recognised in them even a semblance of my old friend.

I held out my hand to him, but he stared blankly at me, and did not move.

"I'm afraid Mr. Hargreaves does not recognise you, sir," said Varin, maliciously.

"If he doesn't, it's your doing," I replied. "Hargreaves, it's I—Field. Don't you know me?"

He stared dully at me, and made no reply.

"You're not very well to-day, are you, Hargreaves?" said Varin.

"Not very well to-day," said Hargreaves, mechanically.

The inspector drew Varin aside. "Have you a doctor in attendance?" he asked.

"I wrote to ask Dr. Humphrey Wright to come to-morrow. Here is his reply. I have only just now received it."

It was a note from the well-known physician saying he would call at ten o'clock on the following morning.

"Why didn't you ask him to come to-day?" I asked.

"Because, my good sir, we are at present following the course of treatment prescribed by the ship's doctor, who saw Mr. Hargreaves only two days ago. He gave me full instructions what to do till to-morrow morning, when he said I should call in further advice."

"The name of the ship and the doctor, please?" said the officer.

Varin gave them both without hesitation.

"Thank you," said the inspector. "Mr. Field here is an old friend of Mr. Hargreaves, and is naturally anxious about him. Perhaps you will allow him to call to-morrow morning after Dr. Wright's visit?"

"I shall be delighted to see Mr. Field to-morrow morning, after Dr. Wright's visit," said Varin.

The words were simple enough, and they were said with a smile, but they vibrated on my highly-strung nerves, and a cold shiver ran through me. Some hidden threat seemed to lie behind them.

Hargreaves' eyes were now shut; he was evidently dozing, and there was no pretext for a longer stay on our part.

As we turned to go I noticed on a chest of drawers a grotesque carving, about a foot in height, that I had not noticed before—a hideous representation of humanity or divinity.

No doubt it was the image of some heathen god, an idol that Hargreaves had brought back with him. I was about to take hold of it for nearer inspection when Varin gripped my arm.

"Do not touch!" he said fiercely; then in his former voice, "I beg your pardon. It is a—a holy relic. Please do not touch it."

I was as much surprised by his sudden change of demeanour as by the solicitude he showed lest a profane hand should desecrate the image. Everything in connection with this man was surprising.

I did not reply, but followed the inspector, and Varin showed us out.

"To-morrow morning then, Mr. Field," said he on the doorstep.

Again those simple words, with a world of mockery behind them.

"There doesn't seem very much amiss there,

sir," said the inspector, when we were outside again. "You will of course see Mr. Hargreaves in the morning, and I shall be glad if you will let me know how you find him."

I thanked the officer warmly for the trouble he had taken, and he left me.

It was evident from our prompt admission that Varin was keeping a watch on the outside.

He had probably observed me alone in the morning, and then after an absence had seen me return accompanied by someone—possibly had guessed our purpose. Perhaps he had even seen the policemen at the back.

Anyway, he had judged it better to admit us; and his readiness in doing so, coupled with the smoothness of our interview, showed we were dealing with a man of remarkable resource and adroitness.

I was firmly convinced that he held Hargreaves at his mercy for his own evil purposes, but nothing that had occurred at our interview suggested this. Hargreaves was in bed, with a fire in the room. A physician of national celebrity was coming in the morning; in the meantime a course of treatment prescribed by the ship's doctor was being followed.

And yet on reflection this very readiness to answer our questions only served to confirm my suspicions.

These thoughts crowded on me with ever-increasing force, until I could bear inaction no longer. Again I turned in the direction of Russell Square, and was soon pacing the pavement there, watching for I know not what.

I had been there perhaps half an hour when I saw a piece of paper blowing along the road in my direction.

In my weary watch I had grown to notice details, and to welcome any trivial diversion. It was this feeling that impelled me to pick it up.

It was evidently a fly-leaf torn from a book, and on one side of it, in a straggling scrawl, was my name and address; on the other: "Help.—R. H."—Hargreaves' initials.

The blood froze in my veins as I read. My worst fears were confirmed.

Hargreaves was in some terrible danger.

The paper had no doubt been thrown by him out of the window, on the chance of catching the eye of some passer-by and being brought to me.

It was his forlorn hope, his last bid for freedom—perhaps for life itself.

Something must be done, and at once. Tomorrow would be too late.

Was there any good in again applying at Scotland Yard? No. To the official eye the message would seem the working of a diseased brain; nay, might it not be suggested that I myself had concocted it?

For I had read in the inspector's demeanour at parting that he regarded me as a somewhat officious person—well-meaning, no doubt, but over-zealous.

No, what was to be done must be done by myself. I must effect an entry alone.

Two hours later I had made my plans, and was watching my opportunity to enter the mews that ran at the back of Russell Square.

Drizzling rain and a slight mist favoured me. I heard them bringing out a horse as I approached the gate. I waited till they had put it in the shafts, and the vehicle had been driven away, waited till the yard was absolutely quiet, and then walked through the gate, alongside the wall, and on to the end of the yard.

There was a heap there, standing on which I could reach the top of the wall. I clambered up, crept along till I came to the right number, and then dropped into the garden.

Keeping close to the wall side, I made my way behind the bushes to the little conservatory that opened on the back room—Hargreaves' study.

I affixed one end of a gummed strip of paper to the pane immediately over the lock inside, and then commenced to cut out the pane with a glazier's diamond.

In half an hour I had cut through the glass and pulled it out. I inserted my hand through the aperture, found the key, turned it, and the door was open.

I was now in the conservatory. A door with glass panels opened from it into the study, and I had to repeat my former operation.

I worked so cautiously that it was a full hour before I had cut out the bottom portion of the panel, and could insert my hand to turn the key.

Twice it gave an appalling creak, twice I drew back and waited in breathless suspense, fearing each moment that the door from the hall would be opened by Varin.

At last the key was turned, the passage free, and I could step into the dining-room—into absolute darkness, for the heavy curtains cut off any ray of light.

My heart was beating like an engine, for the excitement of the day and the tension of the last few hours had told on me; indeed it was enough to unnerve one to know that at any moment a blow from an unseen enemy might disable, if not kill me.

It seemed too good to believe that my approach had been unnoticed, my entry unheard by him. He was now probably lying in wait for me inside, watching me as I stood outlined in the doorway.

For a moment I confess I hesitated; and it needed a violent effort of will to impel myself forward. I knocked against a chair, and could not repress a cry—for I was utterly unstrung.

There was a noise outside. I had been heard. I grasped my revolver tightly: the first shot at any rate should be mine.

The noise continued, but grew no nearer—a dull muffled sound that rose and fell—I couldn't tell what it was.

I waited a few minutes, then felt my way to the door, which opened easily. The noise increased in intensity as I did so.

It came from upstairs, from Hargreaves' bedroom, the door of which was open. It was the dull thud of a muffled drum, or the beat of a wooden gong; and as I opened the door there was added to it the sound of a voice singing a monotonous chant.

A faint light came from the door upstairs; but as I waited and watched, the light grew stronger, and with it the voice rose and fell with increased volume.

The light grew red, redder, ever redder; the voice louder; the drum-thuds quicker. Suddenly the drum ceased, and the song changed to a pæan of triumph; but far above it there came a piercing shriek, a cry of terrible agony.

It was Hargreaves' voice.—But, oh, my God, how altered!

Again and again was the cry repeated; and before it had died away I had dashed upstairs.

A second later I had tripped up, and a trap held my legs like a vice. I fell heavily to the ground, pulling the trigger of my revolver in my fall, and the weapon was knocked out of my hand.

The shrieks had ended: the barbaric chant was resumed.

It came nearer, and Varin stood in the doorway—Varin naked, save for a loin-cloth, with skin tattooed and coloured, with eyes gleaming like some wild beast of prey.

There he stood in the open door, bathed in the lurid glow—a demon at the mouth of hell.

On he came, chanting his devil's song, on the corridor, down the stairs, to me, unable to move, caught in a trap, paralysed by the horror of it all.

Down the stairs he came, caught me in his arms with a grip of iron, and wrenched me from the trap.

For seconds that seemed an infinity of time he held me high above his head; then with a wild yell of exultation he hurled me to the ground, to lie unconscious.

I was wrong in surmising that Varin's statements had satisfied the inspector.

He had telegraphed to the ship's doctor for their confirmation; and when next morning a reply came that Varin had promised to call in Hargreaves' usual medical man immediately on arrival in London, the police at once proceeded to Russell Square, and forced an entrance.

They found me on the floor of the hall, still unconscious.

I was thus spared the horror that met their eyes upstairs, and few would care to hear the details of that human sacrifice to a heathen god.

A cruel flint knife lay on the floor beside the victim, and a blood-smear'd idol grinned on the ghastly crime.

No trace of Varin was found, and nothing more was heard of him.

His disappearance in London was as strange as his discovery in the wilds of the Orinoco.

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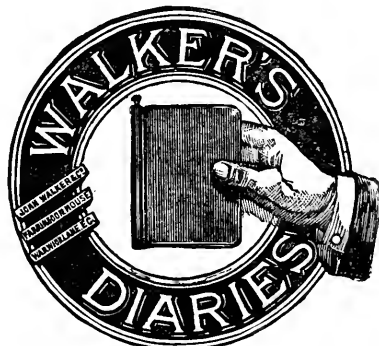
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